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REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICAN LITERATURE: MAO TSE-TUNG'S YENAN TALKS AND THE WRITINGS OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND SEMBENE OUSMANE

by

Ⓒ MARGUERITE GARSTIN

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICAN LITERATURE: MAO TSE-TUNG'S YENAN TALKS AND THE WRITINGS OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND SEMBENE OUSMANE submitted by Marguerite Garstin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes to examine the work of two major socialist African writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane, in relation to the political ideology expressed in Mao Tse-Tung's main work on literary theory, Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art of 1942.

As the peasantry constitutes a large proportion of the population in African countries, Mao's emphasis on the necessity of creating a socialist literature accessible to a peasant audience indicates his ideas could be relevant to African socialist literature.

The first chapter of the thesis discusses the cultural and literary background of Mao's literary theory, as well as the theory itself. Certain points which are unique to Mao's development of Marxist political theory are examined, such as his stress on the necessity of a peasant-based revolution, because they are relevant to the literary theory.

The second chapter of the study briefly reviews the critical literature on Ngugi's major novels, which concentrates on an analysis of aesthetic form and content. The thesis then discusses the socio-political aspects of Ngugi's writings and the positive and negative relation of the ideology he expresses to Mao's literary theory.

Sembene Ousmane's writings, which are examined in the third chapter, show a socialist ideology in both form and content, particularly in his most important novel Les Bouts de bois de dieu. The thesis examines the relation of socialist form and content in his novels in relation to socialist realism and particularly to the literary ideology expressed in the Yenan Talks.

The conclusion shows the extent to which Mao's literary theory is relevant to the socialist ideas expressed in the works of Ngugi and Ousmane and the importance of specific historical conditions to the formulation of a socialist literary theory applicable to African literature. The degree to which western aesthetic ideas influence the formation of socialist ideas in the writings of Ngugi and Ousmane is also pointed out.

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INTRODUCTION

In the China of the early twentieth century the ideological upheaval in the arts prepared the way for the Chinese Communist Party to expound upon and disseminate the idea of a socialist literature which would serve as a weapon of propaganda during the civil war and the war against Japan. At the Ku-t'ien Conference in 1929 Mao Tse-Tung outlined a program of literary, theatrical and artistic propaganda for the troops which was an early formulation of his major ideas on socialist art and literature. These ideas are more fully developed in the Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art given on May 2nd 1942. In the Talks Mao discusses the problem of how literature can best be utilized to serve the cause of the Chinese Communists during the Japanese War of Resistance. Although the Talks became widely known in the nationalist areas only in 1948-49, they established the policy of the Chinese Communist Party on literature, a policy to which all writers and artists under party control were obliged to conform. A very slim volume of work, the Talks nonetheless contain the literary theory which guided the ideological position on literature of the Chinese government from 1949 until after the time of the Cultural Revolution. Because many of the ideas in the Talks derive from Soviet sources on literature (especially Lenin) the content is not highly original, but there is one major difference between the Chinese and Soviet doctrines on politics and literature. Unlike the Soviet socialists who believed that the proletariat must provide the revolutionary leadership, Mao saw the peasants as a strong, independent revolutionary force. In order to ensure the active participation of the peasantry in the revolution, and as a means of providing them with ideological guidance, he stressed the necessity of creating a literature which would be accessible to this group.

In the essay "The National Revolution and the Peasant Movement" published in 1926, Mao states that the peasant question is central to the Chinese revolution. Although the point was generally agreed upon among both the Communists and the Kuomintang, Mao's arguments demonstrating the importance of the peasantry in revolution are a considerable departure from the Soviet idea of proletarian revolution. First of all, Mao suggests that the great obstacle to revolution is the feudal, landlord class in the countryside and that this class can only be overthrown by the peasantry. Secondly, he states that the peasants' ability to organize themselves to overthrow the landlords is much greater than the proletariat's capacity to devise a means to defeat the bourgeoisie. He believes that the peasantry can be molded into a more successful revolutionary force than can the proletariat. Although Mao formally upheld the idea of proletarian hegemony in later years, in practice he continued to guide the revolution according to the idea that the rural population was the major source of revolutionary strength.

Paralleling his departure from the line of orthodox Marxism-Leninism in the realm of politics, Mao makes a radical statement on literature. In the Talks Mao acknowledges that the aim of the party in supporting socialist art and literature is an aim of revolutionary utilitarianism. Through the development of revolutionary literature which can be distributed to the people, the party will be able to convince the peasants that the Communists offer them the greatest hope for a new and better life. Mao's emphasis on the peasantry as the motive force of the revolution and the most important audience for socialist literature suggests a possible link between the Chinese political and cultural ideology and the theory necessary to guide the socialist liberation struggles of other countries with a predominantly rural population.

Implicit in Mao's political and literary theory is the idea that the people's participation in the African liberation struggles could be greatly increased if creative works of a progressive nature were made available to the peasants. In some parts of Africa writers are already producing literature with a socialist viewpoint. The Kenyan author James Ngugi (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) writes about the Mau Mau group and the struggle for national independence as well as the problem of neo-colonialism in post-independence Kenya. The novels of Sembene Ousmane, the Senegalese writer, depict the struggles of the natives to build an agricultural commune and the implications of the major railway strike which took place in Senegal after World War Two. Although both these authors create a literature which is "progressive," it is not immediately apparent whether or not the socialist ideas in their works reach the standards of Mao's literary ideology or if they are relevant to the African political situation. Ngugi's and Sembene's standing as major African writers has not been determined by ideological evaluation. Instead their work has been judged according to western aesthetic standards.

Since Ngugi and Sembene are generally considered to be African socialist writers of some stature, it is desirable to examine the ideological values expressed in their works. As Mao's literary theory appears to be relevant to the political predicament of under-developed countries with a large peasant population, his statements on literature provide an ideological framework suitable to a discussion of the practical, political importance of Ngugi's and Sembene's works in their African context. However, these authors face a paradoxical situation which must be taken into account in examining their writings. As writers educated in the western aesthetic tradition, they are attempting to develop a socialist literature which will pertain to the experience of the African people. Although Ngugi's novels are characterized by a self-conscious attempt at an aesthetic development in the western tradition, while this trait is less pronounced in Ousmane's writings, their socialist tendencies link the works of the two authors so that they may be discussed in relation to Mao's literary theory. The order in which the works by these authors are examined is incidental, as they offer different approaches to socialist literature. Ngugi's writings are more socialist in content than in form but in certain of Ousmane's novels socialist form does conform to the socialist content. However, both authors offer works which provide an interesting study in their positive and negative relation to Mao's literary theory.

CHAPTER I

MAO TSE-TUNG AND MODERN CHINESE LITERARY THEORY

Although there has been some discussion in the western world of the general importance of Mao's literary theory,[1] little effort has been made outside of China to test its validity as a guideline for the writing of socialist literature. This thesis will attempt to rectify this lack, in part, by applying Mao's highly politicized literary theory to some contemporary examples of African socialist literature. In order to accomplish this goal, however, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of Mao's thoughts on art and literature, most of which are discussed in the 1942 _Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art_. The _Talks_ have guided the development of revolutionary Chinese culture from 1942 throughout the time of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This chapter aims to establish the sources and the major features of Mao's conception of literature, to discuss briefly the methods by which the theory is applied, and the role which political concerns play in the establishment of the theory.

In the context of Chinese literary theory the historical roots of Mao's ideas on literature can be traced back to the era of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the New Culture Movement, and the literary theory and fiction produced at that time. In the years immediately previous to 1919 the Chinese intelligentsia was greatly influenced by

Western thought. But the betrayal of China by the Allied powers at the end of the First World War when German holdings in China were given to the Japanese caused a quick reversal in the Chinese attitude towards Western ideas. The Chinese had hoped to recover the power in the Shantung area and it came as a very strong blow to them that the territory was being handed over to the Japanese. The May Fourth Movement represents the student response to this action. A march was held in Peking to encourage the Chinese delegation not to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty and to indicate disagreement with members of the Chinese government and those officials who had appeased the Japanese during the war. The student demonstration gained the sympathy of the people as a whole, but the important point to note is that this spontaneous uprising was made possible by the wave of Western thought which had been sweeping through the Chinese universities since 1915 beginning with the launching of the journal entitled New Youth. The movement, which has been called the New Culture Movement, had "the characteristic feature . . . before the May Fourth Student Movement of 1919 . . . [of] a tendency to total repudiation of all traditional authority based on the Confucian social and moral system and to an uncritical importation of Western ideas."[2] Events of 1919, however, brought a quick disillusionment with Western ideas, and a new stage in the growth of the New Culture Movement.

The revolution in Chinese thought represented by this movement was inevitably felt in the sphere of Chinese literature and thus provided a major impetus for the Chinese Literary Revolution. New Youth published articles advocating literary reform by people such as Hu Shih, a student of philosophy at Columbia University who was a leader in this movement. Hu Shih outlined eight principles of literary reform which provoked further thoughts on revolutionary development in literature.[3] In February 1917 Ch'en Tu-hsui, Professor at Peking National University, founder of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, and Mao's mentor when he was library assistant at the university, declared three principles of revolutionary literature as a development of Hu Shi's reformist ideas:

1. To overthrow the decorative and flattering literature of the aristocracy and to create a plain, simple, and expressive literature of the people.
2. To overthrow the stale and over-flowery literature of classicism and to create a fresh and sincere literature of realism.
3. To overthrow the unintelligible and obscurantist literature of the hermits and to create an understandable and popular literature of society.[4]

Although these three principles do not have the overwhelmingly proletarian, political bias of Mao's Talks the origins of Mao's ideas can be seen in the preceding statement. The main difference is that Ch'en Tu-hsui is primarily concerned with literature itself, while Mao's interest centres on how such literature can best serve certain political goals. But for the China of 1917 Ch'en Tu-hsui's principles represent a radical change in the attitude of the Chinese intelligentsia towards the writing and study of literature. Mao's ideas on culture, however, are derived from his experience of the May Fourth Movement and this is apparent in his writings on the subject. Of the political and cultural nature of the movement Mao says:

> Prior to the May Fourth Movement, China's new culture was a culture of the old-democratic kind and part of the capitalist cultural revolution of the world bourgeoisie. Since the May Fourth Movement it has become new-democratic and part of the socialist cultural revolution of the world proletariat.[5]

The increasingly progressive nature of the New Culture Movement paralleled the growth from reformism to revolution in the literary movement.

During the development of the revolutionary emphasis of the New Culture Movement the famous Chinese fiction writer and critic Lu Hsun became a member of the group in 1918. Mao calls Lu Hsun "the giant of China's cultural revolution,"[6] a description which aptly fits Lu Hsun's leading role in the New Culture Movement. The Diary of a Madman, the first Chinese short story to be written in the vernacular and in the modern style, was published by Lu Hsun in New Youth in May 1918.[7] In protesting the oppressive traditions of feudal China the hero in the story has become insane; the story is representative of Lu Hsun's fictional attacks on the Chinese ruling class:

> . . . Lu Hsun regarded his short stories as the "concrete outcome" of the literary revolution, for they answered in a practical way many theoretical problems--such as what would be the difference between the old and the new literature, the ideal content and form of the latter, etc. --on which Ch'en Tu-hsui, Hu Shi . . . and others had engaged in lengthy but fruitless discussions. These stories are a brand new creation and yet not alien to the Chinese taste and mentality. They are the foundation of modern Chinese literature.[8]

Lu Hsun's works had an enormous impact on Chinese literature; by actually applying the revolutionary principles developed by Ch'en Tu-hsui and Hu Shih, he provides a firm foundation for the revolutionary theory of literature Mao expounds upon in his Talks.

Besides publishing short stories and essays Lu Hsun also played an important part in the literary societies which were to consolidate in 1930 to form the League of Left Wing Writers. The Literary Research Society, an exponent of realism in writing, and the Literary Creation Society, a supporter of romanticism in literature, were both formed in 1921, with Lu Hsun becoming a member of the Literary Research Society. With Mao Tun as its leader this society supported the ideas that intellectuals have a responsibility to society, that literature should expose the grim reality of Chinese life, and that it should awaken the masses of people to the necessity of action in order to change social conditions. Mao Tun later became Minister of Culture under the Communist government and vice-chairman of the All China Federation of Literary and Artistic Circles. The Creation Society, on the other hand, with Kuo Mo-Jo at its head emphasized art for art's sake and beauty and individualism in an art indifferent to purpose. Although the Research Society exemplified the mainstream of Chinese literature at that time, the Creation Society was a strong rival. In 1926, however, Kuo Mo-Jo published Revolution and Literature and became Chief of the Propaganda Section of the Nationalist Armies. With the split between the Communists and the Kuomintang in the following year, the Creation Society began to move closer to a revolutionary stance on literature. In the same year a new movement of proletarian literature became a strong force on the literary scene in Shanghai. The Literary Research Society, of which Lu Hsun was a member, did not agree with the proletarian movement in literature, despite their support for revolutionary literature in general, because they regarded its philosophy as too arbitrary and dogmatic. Lu Hsun's criticism of the proletarian literature indicates that his political and literary position is also a source for Mao's thoughts on literature. Lu Hsun believed that the proletarian writers divorced theory from practice, ignoring the reality of the peasant's desperate situation in favour of political discussions about literature with little actual production of the literature itself. It was impossible for any of the writers to avoid seeing, however, that the struggle between literary groups was ideological and involved either an acceptance or rejection of Marxism.

The eventual outcome of the various polemics and discussions on the ideological position of literature was the merger of all the literary groups into the League of Left Wing Writers in 1930. The intellectual trend in China was becoming firmly entrenched in the path of socialism. During the years 1927 to 1930 Lu Hsun's thought moved from evolutionism to Marxism; thus as the leader of the League of Left-Wing Writers between 1930 and 1936 he was prepared to espouse revolutionary socialism. Although Lu Hsun never became a member of the Communist Party,[9] his attacks on the Kuomintang and its merciless treatment of the Communists were extremely effective. As Dr. Huang Sung-K'ang states:

> During these decisive years, Lu Hsun played a role on the ideological front equal to that played by Mao Tse-Tung on the political front of the Chinese Revolution.[10]

Lu Hsun waged a literary struggle against the servile mentality and the false idea of "fair play" which imprisoned the Chinese people under feudalism and imperialism, secondly, he recognized the necessity for unity between revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice, and thirdly, he attacked the dogmatism of certain elements of revolutionary literature, and finally he upheld a strong spirit of nationalism in his support of the Chinese united front against Japan. Although Mao's thoughts on literature expressed in the Yenan Talks are politically based, the New Culture Movement and the writings of Lu Hsun indicate that his ideas are not without cultural precedent.

Mao's educational background is another source of his attitude towards art and literature.[11] The son of a peasant, Mao was taught the Confucian Analects and the Four Chinese classics in primary school. Although Mao could write an essay in the best classical style and knew the classics extremely well, he disliked them. Instead he read the romances of old China, especially those which included stories of rebellions. Although such books were outlawed, Mao insisted on reading them, realizing after a careful analysis of their content that the only characters portrayed were members of the ruling class; the peasants or the tillers of the soil who supported the rulers never appeared as heroes. At another school he attended at Hsiang Hsiang county Mao studied natural sciences and the newly influential subjects of Western learning, a study he consolidated at a later date through self-education, studying world geography and philosophy. Thus Mao received a traditional education in the classics which manifests itself in the skilful use of classical metres in his poetry, yet his emotional sympathies and eventually his political sympathies were with the study of stories of adventure and rebellion and the books on the reform movement of K'ang Yu-wei (a philosopher of the turn of the century who submitted a program of reform to the Emperor, suggesting a constitutional form of government). Mao read three Marxist books in 1920: The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels, The Class Struggle by Kautsky, and The History of Socialism by Kirkupp.

Although Mao's early education continued to influence his world outlook, he eventually gave up formal study to join the army and work in revolutionary politics. Mao's ideological growth from emotional sympathy with the stories of Rebellion to a strong political stance on culture is apparent in the important essay of 1940, On New Democracy. He suggests:

> Revolutionary culture is a powerful weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution.[12]

In this essay Mao discusses the form of culture developed by Lu Hsün and others who participated in the New Culture Movement. But this culture must not only manifest itself in revolutionary form, it must also serve as a weapon in the development of the revolution. Culture is of primary importance as ideology. Because revolutionary culture is democratic according to Mao, the culture belongs to the masses of people for whom the revolution is fought and whose lives are the source of the culture. In order to serve the Chinese revolution culture must develop several characteristics: a unity of theory and practice, a scientific attitude which seeks for truth on the basis of facts, and a nationalistic fervour. Mao's belief that there can be no revolutionary practice without revolutionary theory, based on Lenin's ideas, also stresses the importance of the cultural front in the revolution. In an essay entitled On the United Front in Cultural

Work written in 1944 Mao adds that there are three priorities in revolutionary work: war against the Japanese, the production of goods, and lastly the dissemination of revolutionary culture. Without a revolutionary culture Mao believes that the army will be inefficient and ignorant and therefore unable to defeat the Japanese.[13] Still later, in 1945, Mao says that:

> It is the peasants who are the chief concern of China's cultural movement at the present stage. If the 360 million peasants are left out, do not the "elimination of illiteracy," "popularization of education," "literature and art for the masses," and "public health" become largely empty talk?[14]

The direction of Mao's cultural policy is clear and it follows that Mao's policy on art and literature points in the same direction.

The difference between the established Marxist-Leninist belief that the proletariat is the vanguard of the revolution and Mao's acknowledgement of the unique contribution of the peasantry was reflected in an internal division among the leaders of the party. The majority of the members of the Central Committee opposed Mao's tactic of agrarian revolution during the period between 1927 and 1934. Mao's political strategy left him with only a marginal position within the party and in 1927 he was expelled from the Central Committee. The party continued to emphasize the importance of the urban workers under the influence of the Shanghai based "returned student group" (a number of party members who had studied in Moscow). However, after the defeat of the Communists at the hands of the Kuomintang, the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee adopted Mao's strategy for rural based revolution. During the Long March Mao continued to consolidate his power within the party and in 1935 he became Chairman of the

Chinese Communist Party, an event which accelerated the establishment of agrarian revolution as the ideal of socialism in China.

The basis of Mao's specific policy on literature which is found in the 1942 Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art cannot be separated from the political climate at the time as many sections of the Talks in one way or another directly refer to criticisms levelled at the Communist Party by various workers on the literary front. The Talks were given as part of a general party rectification movement or cheng feng which Mao launched in the spring of 1942 in order to correct various faults in the functioning of the party as a whole:

> At first the Party used . . . methods of ideological reform to do away with all forms of heterodoxy. The campaign spoke out against both dogmatism and liberalism. While the Party appeared determined to assert Lenin's concept of strictly centralized control and tight Party discipline, there was also a counter-drive against dictatorial attitudes found in the bureaucracy. Liu Shao-chi . . . asserted that the interest of the individual should be subordinated unconditionally to the interests of the Party. Yet he also demanded that Party members have the opportunity to use their own specialized talents.[15]

In the area of art and literature the criticisms levelled against the party constitute a long list.[16] Many of the attacks came in the form of tsa wen or satirical essays patterned on Lu Hsun's essays of the 1930's. Ting Ling, China's most important authoress, began the attacks on the party in an essay criticizing the inegalitarian treatment of women which took place at Yenan. After this first major criticism other writers followed suit. The author Lo Feng protested against the curtailment of free creative activity by political demands, while Wang Shi-wei disagreed with the party's advocation of indigenous, semi-literary styles in writing which could be appreciated by the masses of the people. Wang believed that because the Chinese people had been held in subjugation so long they could not possibly be the originators of a definitive culture. He also attacked the party cadres, stating that a large gap existed between the leaders and the led, and he called on writers and artists to criticize the party's defects in this area. The poet Ai Ch'ing is an example of strong opposition in his suggestion that the function of the writer was not to extoll the virtues of the party, but to bring to light faults in party structure which needed rectifying. Ai Ch'ing also believed that the writer's task was to care for the spiritual, not the material health of man and that it was necessary for the writer to have complete freedom in order to expound his truly unique understanding of life.

Although the criticisms offered by such writers as Ai Ch'ing were made in what was believed to be the true spirit of the rectification movement, the spirit of the desire to reduce the distance between party members and other segments of the population in order to strengthen the party, they met with strong resistance from party officials. Instead of a rectification movement originally meant to move the party in a progressive direction, the criticisms only caused the party to strengthen controls and reassert its dictatorship. Mark Selden explains the basis of the apparently contradictory set of goals by analyzing the various political impulses forced to coexist in China since 1937 by the Chinese national situation and the war against Japan.[17] On the one hand the revolutionary party stressed broad participation in the class struggle as well as in the national war, while on the other hand, the existence of the Second United Front with the Kuomintang joined the revolutionaries with a group of bureaucrats and members of the educated elite, landlords, former officials, intellectuals, and students, who upheld the policies of stable administration in the United Front. One aspect of the 1942 _cheng feng_ movement was an attempt to bring these disparate groups into harmony with each other, and to disperse the tensions which posed a threat to the party's political program in the border regions against the Japanese.

At first Mao conceived of a three month campaign of ideological reform which was launched on April 3rd, 1942. The operating methods of the campaign have been described as follows:

> . . . cadres throughout the border region began an elaborate program of study and a thorough examination and revaluation of the work of every organ and individual. Special committees at all echelons of the party, government and army directed the study campaign. Throughout the border region cadres were to devote two hours per day to study, which included group discussion and criticism, preparation of study notes, and examination of designated texts.[18]

The originally planned three month period of rectification was extended another six months and became more and more concentrated on, and aimed at, the students and intellectuals, writers and artists. The writer's criticism of the party had a considerable influence in shifting the focus of the _cheng feng_ movement away from the problems of bureaucracy and onto the difficulties placed in the party's path by the creative artists:

> Demands for intellectual independence originating from within the Party could be far more subversive than those coming from outside it. Consequently the drive to enforce intellectual and literary orthodoxy had evolved by May 1942 into a refutation of the views expressed by these critical writers in their articles. Since these writers spoke for

> the intellectuals and comrades, a confutation of their non-orthodox attitudes was not merely aimed at them in particular, but at intellectuals and Party cadres in general.[19]

The rebuttal of the intellectual unorthodox attitude is found in Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art given by Mao in May 1942.

In the Talks Mao replies to criticisms of the party made by Ting Ling, Wang Shi-wei, Ai Ch'ing, and others. In particular he answers the statement made by Lo Feng that art cannot be dependent on politics. Mao disagrees with this idea as well as with the concept upheld by Wang Shi'wei that art is based on a study of universal human nature. Instead Mao believes that art mirrors the class nature of man present in contemporary society:

> In class society there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes. We uphold the human nature of the proletariat and of the masses of the people, while the landlord and bourgeois classes uphold the human nature of their own classes, only they do not say so but make it out to be the only human nature in existence.[20]

Mao also abolishes a belief that was being circulated among the intellectuals at that time that literature must expose the dark side of society as intensely as it extolled the bright side. Suggesting that this attitude is based on a mistaken interpretation of Lu Hsun's satirical essays, Mao sets forth the official party line on Lu Hsun according to which his bitter satire was necessary under past Kuomintang rule, but in present Communist areas such bitterness in creative work is no longer necessary:

> Living under the rule of dark forces and deprived of freedom of speech, Lu Hsun used burning satire and freezing irony, cast in the form of essays, to do battle; and

> he was entirely right . . . but in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region and the anti-Japanese base areas behind the enemy lines, where democracy and freedom are granted in full to the revolutionary writers and artists and withheld only from counter-revolutionaries, the style of the essay should not simply be like Lu Hsun's. Here we can shout at the top of our voices and have no need for veiled and roundabout expressions, which are hard for the people to understand.[21]

In the Communist held areas the only expressions which need to be veiled are those which are not directly related to the revolutionary cause.

As a whole the Talks enlarge on these ideas of propaganda, but they also acknowledge the extensive influence of the historical context on Mao's pronouncements on art and literature:

> The problem of audience. . . . In the . . . Border Region and the anti-Japanese base areas of northern and central China, this problem differs from that on the Kuomintang areas, and differs still more from that in Shanghai before the War of Resistance. In the Shanghai period, the audience for works of revolutionary literature and art consisted mainly of a section of students, office workers and shop assistants. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance the audience in the Kuomintang areas became somewhat wider, but it still consisted mainly of the same kind of people. . . . In our base areas the situation is entirely different. Here the audience . . . consists of workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary cadres.[22]

Mao stresses the influence and importance of the temporal, political situation on the content of art and literature favoured by the party. The aim of the Talks is to ensure that in the immediate situation literature follows the correct, revolutionary path of development. But in order to consolidate the function of art and literature as revolutionary weapons, Mao suggests it is necessary to build a cultural (or ideological) army alongside the regular army--this is the task of the writers and artists. It is an objective that can only be established by completely integrating revolutionary art and literature with the culture of the masses of the people. Mao believes that the objective of such literature is its use in uniting and educating the people. It is to be used for propaganda purposes.

The major problem standing in the way of writers achieving this goal is their lack of understanding of the role class stand plays in literature, or so Mao believes. Their attitude toward the revolutionary struggle (whether it is positive or negative), their methods of work (i.e. their amount of contact with the people), and their habits of study (of Marxism-Leninism), are also problems which must be faced. Mao makes very clear where the emphasis lies in the intellectuals' method of work:

> Our writers and artists have their literary and art work to do, but their primary task is to understand the people and know them well.[23]

All literary production is overshadowed by this concern; it directs the writer's relation to the masses, the necessity of upholding the struggles of that class as exemplary subject matter for the purpose of educating the masses in Marxism-Leninism, and suggests that the ultimate goal of literature is its role in building a socialist society. In order to best communicate with the people authors should learn to write in their language--the vernacular or "mass style." Only then can writers completely fulfill their function in the "revolutionary machine."[24]

Mao continues his commentary on revolutionary writing by stating that all problems should be discussed on the basis of facts. The "facts" in this case happen to be historical events, the anti-Japanese

War, the anti-Fascist World War, the oppression of the Chinese people, and the revolutionary cultural movement which had taken place since the May Fourth Movement. Asserting that historical development is the only fact relevant to literary creation, Mao delineates the two major literary problems discussed at the Yenan Forum: the problem of _who_ the literature and art should serve and the question of _how_ it should serve. Mao affirms categorically that literature should serve the masses--that is the workers, peasants, soldiers, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and the intellectuals. Although literature may serve the petty-bourgeoisie, nevertheless, it must uphold the class stand of the workers and peasants. As for the past literary traditions, they can have a revolutionary value if infused with new form and content, but writers should be careful not to rely too heavily on ancient literary customs because this inevitably means a leaning towards the ruling class literature of feudalism and imperialism. Mao acknowledges that fundamental problems remain before literature can achieve the ideal revolutionary state, serving the correct class and utilizing literary customs in the correct manner, because some writers look down upon the workers and peasants (Wang Shi-wei might be mentioned as a case in point here). Mao firmly believes, however, that this problem can be solved by the writer's active study of Marxism-Leninism. By this statement Mao means the study sessions which took place during the _cheng feng_ movement.

The second problem, as to how literature should serve the people, provokes Mao's comment that it can best serve by "popularization" and by "raising of standards."[25] In a simple, plain manner literature should popularize the revolutionary ideas needed to conduct the class struggle of the masses. Any literature which can be appreciated by, or be a source of knowledge to, the other classes must be dispensed with. Mao states that the idea of raising the standards of literature and culture should follow the direction of popularization; standards in art and literature should be raised only in the direction of revolutionary culture, not to the level of the feudal class or the bourgeoisie. The problem of raising standards can only be looked at in the context of whom the literature is to serve. Since literature must serve the masses, the criteria for the raising of standards is essentially a political criteria.

Although Mao's instructions on popularization and raising standards offer general political guidelines, they hardly provide any instruction aimed at the unique role of the artist and his struggle to arrive at aesthetic values. In fact the role of the artist loses all originality and becomes completely subordinate to political expediency. One of Mao's more specific instructions, which is still at a great distance from the aesthetic realm, deals with the source of art:

> Revolutionary literature and art are the products of the reflection of the life of the people in the brains of revolutionary writers and artists. The life of the people is always a mine of the raw materials for literature and art, materials in their natural form, materials that are crude but most vital, rich, and fundamental; they make all literature and art seem pallid by comparison; they provide literature and art with an inexhaustible source, their only source.[26]

In depicting the struggles of the people, however, only the positive side of life should be shown in any detail:

> "Literary and artistic works have always laid equal stress on the bright and the dark, half and half." This statement contains many muddled ideas. It is not true that literature and art have always done this. . . . Soviet literature in the period of socialist construction portrays mainly the bright. . . . All the dark forces harming the masses of the people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled. . . .[27]

Such rules, however, do little more than enlarge upon the exact political criteria of literature and in no way provide any aesthetic direction for the writer.

The same can be said of Mao's criteria for literary and art criticism. Mao states that literary criticism is "one of the principle methods of struggle in the world of literature. . ."[28] and primary to Mao's critical methodology, which he touches on briefly, is a judgement of the political effect of literature on the masses of the people. Although Mao acknowledges that artistic criteria may be used in judging literature, he points out that at the moment the political side poses more of a problem and that therefore his comments will be concentrated in this area. He disagrees with the theory of human nature as a criteria for judging art and once again stresses the inevitable class nature of art.[29] Another criteria for judging literature is to examine it for an expression of the positive side of life. The author should be careful to expose characters and actions which are counter revolutionary but criticism of the people should be expressed in a less harsh, more acceptable manner. Literature which eulogizes the people is highly acceptable:

> Why should we not eulogize the people, the creators of the history of mankind? Why should we not eulogize the proletariat, the Communist Party, New Democracy and socialism? There is a type of person who has no enthusiasm for the people's cause and looks coldly from the

> sidelines at the struggles and victories of the proletariat and its vanguard; what he is interested in and never weary of eulogizing, is himself, plus perhaps a few figures in his small coterie.[30]

Thus the main function of the literary critic is to instruct the writer in how to eulogize the proletariat, and to sharply censure any deviation from this strict political line. As with literature, literary criticism should be a component part of the smoothly operating "revolutionary machine." Mao does not touch on the difficulties of aesthetic experience, the use of the imagination, or the workings of the creative mind. Although he pretends to maintain the double standard, in stressing the political aspects and ignoring the aesthetic aspects of literature Mao was able to deflect three trends in revolutionary literature which had developed since the May Fourth Movement: realism, sentimentalism, and satire.[31] As none of these trends served the needs of propaganda they were adapted to the purposes of the Communist party. Realism was turned into praise for revolutionary progress, sentimentalism and love took on a class-nature, and satire was directed not at faults within the party, but against the class enemy.

The origins of Mao's literary theory in the Soviet concepts of literature is pointed out by T.A. Hsia:

> Though the Russian terms were not mentioned, what he required of literature and art was the fulfilment of familiar Russian concepts "ideynost" (ideological expression), "partiinost" (party spirit), and "narodnost" (national character).[32]

Mao refers to Lenin on two points: the idea that literature should serve the millions of working people and the belief that it must be a "cog and wheel" in the revolutionary machine. As with Mao's belief in the importance of party spirit in literature, these ideas are derived from Lenin's writings on "Party Organization and Party Literature." Indigenous literary forms are central to Mao's concept of revolutionary literature, as is evident when he suggests that:

> We must take over all the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage, critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as examples. . . .[33]

Mao's emphasis on indigenous literary forms parallels Maxim Gorky's definition of socialist realism as a literature which integrates folklore into its basic concepts:

> . . . folklore . . . created the most profound, vivid, and artistically perfect types of heroes. . . . It is important to note that pessimism is entirely foreign to folklore. . . . The collective body is in some way distinguished by a consciousness of its own immortality and an assurance of its triumph over all hostile forces.[34]

Mao's attitude towards the legacy of China's literary past, as well as his belief that literature must depict the people in a positive light closely resembles Gorky's position on the importance of Russian folklore.

Lenin's concept of national culture also appears to have had a considerable impact on Mao's definition of revolutionary literature. Lenin points out that "there are two national cultures in every culture."[35] He suggests that:

> The elements of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in *every* national culture, since in *every* nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism. But every nation also possesses a bourgeois culture (and most nations a reactionary and clerical culture as well) in the form, not merely of "elements" but of the *dominant* culture. Therefore, the general "national culture" *is* the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie.[36]

Mao not only discusses the importance of China's literary heritage in the Talks, he also divides the development of culture into different stages. The culture of the feudal and comprador classes gave way to the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist culture of the masses after the May Fourth Movement. The fact that Mao believes there is something worth saving in the ancient literature indicates that anti-feudal literature must have existed in the past as a current parallel to the feudal culture.

The general impact of Soviet literary theory on Mao's Talks is apparent when Mao says that Chinese writers should learn from "the experience of foreign countries, and especially Soviet experience."[37] He specifically refers to the novel by Alexander Fadayev, Rozgrom or The Debacle (also translated as The Rout or The Nineteen) which Lu Hsun translated into Chinese in 1931. Lu Hsun translated some short stories and novels from the fellow-traveller and proletarian literary traditions in the Soviet Union[38] as well as selections from Plekhanov and Lunacharsky and Trotsky's book Literature and Revolution.[39] Thus the Chinese writers had some knowledge of literary developments in the Soviet Union. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how much direct knowledge Mao had of Lu Hsun's translations, Mao and the Soviet authorities on cultural policy both relied on the same source--Lenin--to validate their ideas. However, Mao goes much further in advocating party control of literature, as is apparent in his theory and in his practice.

In Mao's version of the Soviet doctrine the revolutionary writer was to search for identity with the people in a very practical sense.

The concrete reality of his instruction is evident in one event of the cheng feng movement--the "hsia-hsiang" or "to the village" movement. The second phase of this movement, which occurred in the spring of 1942, sent the students and intellectuals, who had been studying under the rectification movement at Yenan, out into the Chinese villages. In the hope that the insights gained by this experience would subsequently appear in their artistic work, they were to learn the problems and potentials of peasant life as well as teach new skills to the villagers. One effect of the extremely practical nature of this intellectual reform is noted by T.A. Hsia:

> This movement . . . was a depersonalization movement. The search for an identification with the "people" forces the artist to neglect his own inner needs, whether moral or aesthetic.[40]

Mao's campaign against individualism within the party and particularly among the intellectuals was difficult to accomplish as indicated by the extremity of his methods of reform. Writers and artists were removed from all creative tasks and sent out to help with the party's administrative changes in the villages. Although their work was only indirectly related to any creative task, and relevant then only because of Mao's emphasis on the political aspects of literature, those writers sent out to the villages came to understand that:

> . . . China's crucial problems could never be resolved in the cities, in bureaucratic offices~~,~~ or in their schools. Rather they knew they must go to the villages, to the "production front," to join with the people in new attacks on poverty, oppression, and economic stagnation. . . .[41]

Although this is the major political lesson of the Chinese revolution, its relevance to the creative workers, other than as a means of keeping their writing on the correct political line, is questionable.

The literature produced in this period, however, achieved the major goals Mao set out for it:

> During the Yenan Period the Chinese Communists built up a literature as they built up a party organization and an army: as an instrument of policy, fashioned in accordance with Marxist principles.[42]

The anti-individualistic attack on the intellectuals is expressed in a party literature which is anonymous, lacking in idiosyncratic interpretation, devoted to common themes viewed from a collective perspective, and without precedent in the classical tradition.[43] Writers concentrate on subjects such as the exposure of feudal evils, eulogies of the heroes of the resistance, the positive nature of land reform, and the development of industrialization. That the literature was aimed at mass consumption was evident in the appearance of folk art in great quantity; this is an example of the popularization Mao advocates in his Talks. Folk dance and folk drama, poetry imitating the folk song in rhythm and idiom, novels in the style of traditional story telling, and woodcuts in the national style were all artistic products of the Yenan period.[44]

Written during the Yenan period, the novel The Heroes of Lu-liang by Ma Feng and Hsi Jung deals with the theme of the war against the Japanese and is clearly intended to be read by the masses. A tale of the various adventures of war, it is written in the vernacular and in a lively style, with humour carefully blended with enthusiasm for the people's participation in the war. The story is immediately intelligible, as Cyril Birch points out, and it is an obvious choice for reading aloud.[45] As the parts of the novel achieve unity only on the basis of physical setting, little literary skill is displayed but the book is nonetheless enjoyable reading. Another book about the war, New "Son and Daughter Heroes" by K'ung Chueh and Yuan Ching is a rewriting of a popular novel of 1878 Son and Daughter Heroes by Wen K'ang. The protagonists in this story, who begin with a total resistance to any new ideas and end up taking an active Communist stance, are typical in Mao's sense of the word--"nearer the ideal and therefore more universal." In the relationship between the peasant hero and heroine the demands of love are carefully subordinated to those of the party. The story also gives lessons in co-operation with the Japanese soldiers who are persuaded to join the Communists and fight their true enemies--the Japanese ruling class.

Aimed at a different audience than The Heroes of Lu-Ling, New "Son and Daughter Heroes" is closer to the European or Soviet style of writing and thus more appropriate for the cadres whose cultural development is at a higher level than that of the masses. The fact that literature must be directed towards different levels of the population--the masses and the cadres--is made clear in the Yenan Talks. Mao says that literature for the cadres should have higher standards than literature for the masses:

> Besides such raising of standards as meets the needs of the masses directly, there is the kind which meets their needs indirectly, that is, the kind which is needed by the cadres. The cadres are the advanced element of the masses and generally have received more education; literature and art of a higher level are entirely necessary for them. . . . Whatever is done for the cadres is also entirely for the masses, because it is only through the cadres that we can educate and guide the masses.[46]

Not only does this belief have a direct influence on the production of literature, it also indicates the important role of the party. The party leads the masses towards a progressively greater understanding of the practical and philosophical importance of the class ideal and of the ideological theories connected with the class ideal of the proletariat.

Novels of the Yenan period deal with the land reform program. Lao Chao Goes Down to the Village is the story of a communist cadre who is sent to a village to help in the development of an efficient agricultural system. While there, he exposes the dishonesty and selfishness of the local landowner and the town's headman, and in doing so sets the village on the road to agricultural prosperity. Another similar novel, The Hurricane, which won the Stalin Prize, deals with the same theme, but it comes closer to fitting the definition of Socialist Realism due to the inclusion of details on crops, livestock, and rent rates. Writings about industrial work also became more numerous after the Yenan period, and the novel Energy by Ts'ao Ming, dealing with the theme of the rebuilding of a Manchurian power station under the guidance of communist cadres, is an early example of such a work.

But despite the apparent success of Mao's instructions on literature, protests and expressions of discontent continued to be voiced by the writers at Yenan. T.A. Hsia notes that two writers Ting Ling and Ho Ch'i-fang continued to express themselves individually instead of according to the prescribed rules.[47] The work of both writers represents a continuation of the May Fourth tradition of realism in literature, antithetic to the strictures imposed by Mao's Talks. Ting

Ling's short stories which superficially appear to be propaganda against the Japanese enemy, really deal with the problems of human beings caught up in an inhuman war and an inhuman revolutionary machine; human beings are only tools in the hands of the communist cadres in such stories as In the Hospital, New Belief, and When I Was in Hsia Village. Ho Ch'i-fang's poetry, on the other hand, concentrates not so much on denouncing the inhumanity of the revolutionary situation, but on decrying the complete loss of individual sentiment and understanding which inevitably follows the mass revolutionary line Mao advocates for art.

Apart from the Talks, Mao has made few new and definitive pronouncements on revolutionary literature and art. However, five brief statements of his were published in the Peking Review of 1967.[48] The most important of these, written in October 1954, concerns the first novel written in the Chinese vernacular, published in 1792, The Dream of the Red Chamber (Hung lou meng). Mao's interest in the novel is centred on the literary critical controversy surrounding it. He comments "that the struggle is about to start again against the Hu Shih school of bourgeois idealism which has been poisoning young people in the field of classical literature for more than thirty years."[49] By idealism Mao means the school of literary criticism which emphasizes the autobiographical aspects of the novel as an important means of analysis. Mao prefers to see an analysis of the novel according to the methods of critical realism which discusses the feudal social structure depicted in the novel rather than the bourgeois concern which compares events in the story with the author's love affairs and which discusses the sentimentality of young women.

An article reprinted in the Peking Review of 1975 suggests that the two different schools of literary criticism represented in the analysis of The Dream of the Red Chamber can be called revisionist and revolutionary.[50] Hu Shih, a member of the revisionist school is called "a traitor who worshipped foreign things."[51] In keeping with the revisionist attitude he:

> . . . spread the nonsense that the novel was an "autobiography" expressing the author's "remorse over his early love affairs" . . . and propagated the idea that "love is nothing but an illusion" . . . .[52]

In contrast, the truly revolutionary line analyses the book as an outstanding historical-political document which reflects the class struggle of eighteenth century feudal society. According to these critics the story not only destroys the validity of ancient Confucian codes but also depicts the masses of the people as willing to fight back against their masters. Another critic points out, according to the progressive line, that the novel "is a great work of critical realism."[53] One writer adds that "in the history of world literature, this is the earliest masterpiece of critical realism, preceding the critical realist literature of Europe by more than a hundred years."[54] On the basis of Mao's short but pointed directive on The Dream of the Red Chamber the critics engage in a vigorous controversy along highly political lines, either refuting or whole-heartedly accepting the notion of art ruled by political necessity, a position proposed in the Yenan Talks.

Mao's four other instructions on art and literature discuss opera, film, and the general political line of the arts. In the traditional form of the opera the people are made to look like "dirt," but in the revolutionary opera Driven to Join the Liangshan Mountain Rebels Mao notes that the people are presented in a favourable light. Historical truth is restored and the people appear in their heroic role as fighters against the oppressors. In 1951 the film The Life of Wu Hsun is severely criticized by Mao for its glorification of old traditions and its negative portrayal of the role of the peasants in a rebellion. But Mao encourages study and discussion of the film in order to be able to publicize a strong rebuttal of its faults. In 1963 and 1964 Mao published two other instructions about art and literature. The first criticizes the lack of progressive, revolutionary movement in art; "the social and economic base has changed, but the arts as part of the super-structure, which serve this base, still remain a problem."[55] In the other instruction Mao claims that literary publications do not truly reflect the lives of the peasants and workers due to bureaucratization within the party; "in recent years, they have slid right down to the brink of revisionism."[56] In order to recover from this political deviation Mao believes that literary associations must make a strong effort to remould themselves along the correct line.

Other writings by Mao on art and literature are scattered throughout his works but most only repeat or enlarge upon comments made in the Yenan Talks. In 1955 Mao said of literary style that it should be "lively," full of "fervid enthusiasm," "immediately intelligible," and speak "entirely to the point."[57] In the 1937 essay On Contradiction Mao mentions the transformations of mythology in literature in relation to the identity of opposites within contradictions, pointing out that legendary changes are not concrete, real changes and therefore do not reflect concrete contradictions.[58] Because myths are not built from concrete contradictions they are not a scientific reflection of reality and should not be treated as such in solving the problems of life or of the method of literary analysis. In the work _Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing_ of February 1942 Mao speaks against all forms of absolutism and formalism in literature suggesting that articles should be short and to the point, carefully researched and thought out, speak to a peasant audience, serve a useful purpose without pretension, utilize the expressive vernacular of the people, and analyze problems in a straightforward Marxist manner.[59] In essence Mao is expounding upon the most effective way of writing party propaganda as a means to communicate with the masses, a theme he was to enlarge upon in relation to literature in the _Talks_ given only a few weeks later.

The Yenan _Talks_, in the context of the party's rectification or _cheng feng_ movement, set a strong precedent for the rectification movements which were to follow in the next thirty years. As Mark Seldon notes, it is the prototype of campaigns such as the Hundred Flowers Movement and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.[60] In relation to these movements it is possible to see the practical application of Mao's literary and artistic theories and some of the problems which arise from this application. The _cheng feng_ movement in Yenan began with a drive to ensure proper ideological reform among the cadres as well as an invitation for critics to voice their disagreements with the party. This move was made in an effort to correct increasing bureaucratization in the party and the cadres loss of contact with the masses. It ended up as an attempt to keep all party members, particularly the students and intellectuals in Yenan, strictly in line with orthodox party policy. The process is also true of the Hundred Flowers Movement and the Cultural Revolution; in both instances literature and art were used as a means of initiating critical struggle among contradictory elements both within and outside the party.

Mao's rules for Chinese literature expressed in the Yenan Talks show his primary concern with politics and the political implications of literary ideas. His criteria for judging literature are based on its efficacy as a weapon in the class struggle. Aesthetic guidance is minimal and thus literature becomes equated with propaganda. The relation between the Communist Party and the writers is one of "democratic dictatorship" in which the writer is expected to do his best to follow the party line on literature; the party invites criticism from writers only in order to be able to rebutt the criticisms as a negative example. Such strict control of creative functions must make it difficult for the writers to work to the full extent of their ability. But apart from these limitations Mao has created a set of rules which, although they ignore aesthetic criteria, provide full directives for revolutionary content in literature. Whether or not these rules can be applied to literature created outside of China, in different political conditions, has yet to be discovered, but the occurrence since 1959 of several Afro-Asian Writer's Conferences suggests a connection between Mao's literary theory and the revolutionary fiction produced in Africa.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1] T.A. Hsia, "Twenty Years After the Yenan Forum," China Quarterly (Jan.-March 1963), pp. 226-253; E. Roudinesco, "Mao Tse-Tung et la littérature de propagande," Action Poétique, 51-52, pp. 186-190; Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, Marxist Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[2] Huang Sung-K'ang, Lu Hsun and the New Culture Movement (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1957; rpt. Westport: Hyperion Press, 1975), p. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 12.

[4] Ibid., p. 13.

[5] Mao Tse-Tung, "On New Democracy," Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), II, p. 372.

[6] Ibid., p. 376.

[7] Huang Sung-K'ang, p. 44.

[8] Ibid., p. 47.

[9] For a discussion of Lu Hsun's relations with the Communist Party see Harriet C. Mills, "Lu Hsun and the Communist Party," China Quarterly, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1960), pp. 17-27.

[10] Huang Sung-K'ang, p. 128.

[11] Edgar Snow, Red Star Over China (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1961), pp. 121-128.

[12] Mao, "On New Democracy," p. 382.

[13] Mao Tse-Tung, Mao Tse-Tung on Art and Literature (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p. 123.

[14] Ibid., p. 130.

[15] Merle Goldman, "Writer's Criticism of the Party in 1942," China Quarterly, No. 17 (Jan.-March 1964), p. 206.

[16] Ibid., pp. 174-94.

[17] Mark Selden, The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 189.

[18] Ibid., p. 199.

[19] Goldman, p. 218.

[20] Mao Tse-Tung, Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), pp. 31-32.

[21] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[22] Ibid., p. 4.

[23] Ibid., p. 5.

[24] Ibid., p. 2.

[25] Ibid., p. 17.

[26] Ibid., p. 18.

[27] Ibid., p. 33.

[28] Ibid., p. 28.

[29] For a full discussion of this issue see D.W. Fokkema, "Chinese Criticism of Humanist Campaigns Against the Intellectuals 1964-65," China Quarterly, No. 26 (April-June 1966), pp. 68-81.

[30] Mao, Talks, p. 35.

[31] Hsia, pp. 231-32.

[32] Ibid., p. 246.

[33] Mao, _Talks_, p. 18.

[34] Maxim Gorky, "Soviet Literature," _Problems of Soviet Literature: Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress_, ed. H.G. Scott (London: Martin Lawrence), p. 36.

[35] V.I. Lenin, _On Literature and Art_ (Moscow: Progress Pub., 1970), p. 92.

[36] Ibid., p. 84.

[37] Mao, _Talks_, p. 21.

[38] Merle Goldman, ed., _Modern Chinese Literature in the May Fourth Era_ (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 211.

[39] Ibid., p. 367.

[40] Hsia, p. 237.

[41] Selden, p. 228.

[42] Cyril Birch, "Fiction of the Yenan Period," _China Quarterly_, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1960), p. 1.

[43] Ibid., p. 5.

[44] Hsia, p. 237.

[45] Birch, pp. 6-7.

[46] _Talks_, p. 22.

[47] Hsia, p. 240.

[48] Mao Tse-tung, "Five Documents on Art and Literature," _Peking Review_, 2 June 1967, pp. 5-8.

[49] Ibid., p. 7.

[50] Liang Hsia, "Keep on Criticizing the Bourgeoisie: Notes on Studying Chairman Mao's Letter Concerning Studies of the Dream of the Red Chamber," Peking Review, No. 21 (23 May 1975), pp. 14-17.

[51] Ibid., p. 14.

[52] Ibid., p. 14.

[53] Hsu Min, "The Dream of the Red Chamber and Its Author," Peking Review, 25 Oct. 1963, p. 25.

[54] Mao Tun, "What We Know of Tsao Hseuh-chin," Chinese Literature, 5 (1964), p. 97.

[55] Mao, "Five Instructions," p. 8.

[56] Ibid., p. 8.

[57] Mao, Mao on Art and Literature, p. 131.

[58] Mao, Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1971), p. 122.

[59] Mao, Selected Readings, pp. 230-49.

[60] Selden, p. 188.

CHAPTER II

SOCIALIST IDEAS IN THE NOVELS OF NGUGI WA THIONG'O

To what extent African literature is directly influenced by Mao's ideas on literary theory and praxis is extremely difficult to judge. The Afro-Asian Writer's Conference held at Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan, from December 5th to 10th 1958, drew representatives from six African countries, as well as a twenty-one man delegation from the People's Republic of China.[1] Although a general agreement existed among writers at this conference that literature should be committed to a political cause, an expression of political unity was declared among the writers only in the broadest sense, with little discussion of literary schools or of literary theory. This conference was one of a series organized between 1950 and 1970, which stressed the problems of colonialism and the struggles for independence as displayed in various national literatures. A separate series of Afro-Asian Writer's Conferences was organized under the guidance of Peking in the 1960's, dealing specifically with literary theory and cultural revolution and emphasizing the party line in literature as expressed in Mao's Talks.[2] At the conference held in Peking in 1967, attended by writers from thirty-four countries and regions, the Talks were suggested as a guideline for cultural revolution in Africa. The existence of the Peking conferences suggests that Mao's literary theory has penetrated the African continent--at least to some extent. However, it is Mao's stress on the role of the peasantry in revolutionary literature which suggests a link, if not a direct influence, with literature pertinent to the African anti-colonialist struggles. James Ngugi (or Ngugi wa Thiong'o) is a Kenyan writer whose thought shows a growing concern with the oppression of the Kenyan peasants, and whose novels are clearly influenced by F. Fanon's theory of black revolution.[3] Fanon suggests that the authentic revolutionary class in the Third World is the peasantry and acceptance of this thesis links his writings with Mao's criteria for literary creation and criticism. This chapter will examine the development of political thought in Ngugi's major novels, relating them to their historical context. It will also look at the relations--both positive and negative--of the ideological and aesthetic aspects of Ngugi's works to Mao's literary theory.

Literary criticism of Ngugi's novels is largely devoted to a consideration of the aesthetic aspects of his writing, with little emphasis on, or ideological analysis of, the historical and political content. W.J. Howard concentrates on an exegesis of the themes in Ngugi's works, the sets of image patterns, the use of religious myths, the portrayal of the hero, and the psychological development of the characters. He criticizes Ngugi's novel A Grain of Wheat for an excessive amount of historical fact which results in confusion between fiction and history.[4] Eustace Palmer suggests that, in Weep Not Child, the choice of a child as hero and as the central consciousness in the novel weakens the plot in addition to detracting from the tragedy depicted. In The River Between, Palmer is concerned with the psychological development of the hero and the weaknesses which eventually bring about his downfall.[5] Wilfred Cartey notes that the subject in this novel is the clash between the colonial order and the traditional way of life, but he does not attempt to analyse the socio-economic motivations behind this clash as they appear in the book.[6] Ime Ikkeddeh concerns himself with the thematic progression of Ngugi's novels, including the importance of Christianity in the modern Gikuyu culture.[7] Adrian Roscoe, on the other hand, notes that:

> . . . Ngugi's Homecoming [a book of essays] records how deeply his world view has been influenced by Marx. The niceties of land disputes, cultural vertigo, and spiritual chaos are well enough; but behind and beneath them all, as if in explanation of them, lies the framework of ideas which are the parameters of Marxism.[8]

Roscoe adds, however, that ultimately "human relations are what he cares about most passionately."[9] He finds this emphasis on human relations the redeeming grace of Ngugi's writing and, analyzing it along this line, barely touches on Ngugi's class vision. In contrast, Peter Nazareth deliberately examines the question of whether or not A Grain of Wheat is a socialist novel, concluding that the book "could not be explicitly socialist because of historical reasons" (such as the overwhelming importance of the national independence struggle and the Mau Mau rebellion), but that it is socialist "by implication."[10] Nazareth does not indicate what he means by socialist, other than to point out Fanon's influence on Ngugi. On the whole, however, critical study of Ngugi's novels has contributed little to a knowledge of the major subject of his books--the cultural and political struggles of the Gikuyu peasants against oppression. An examination of Ngugi's ideological development from emotional, but otherwise uninvolved, sympathy with the peasant's cause to a militant political stand may extend our understanding of his writing.

The River Between, although published in 1965 after Weep Not Child, was the first novel written by Ngugi, and his early consciousness of the political and historical problem of the Gikuyu tribe is reflected in his initial writing. The novel is a story of personal problems which result from the breakdown of tribal society under British colonial rule. The loss of Gikuyu tradition is stressed in the opening paragraphs of the novel, which recount the myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the founders of the tribe, who received the immense and fertile land from Murungu, the Creator, "to rule and till . . . [for] posterity."[11] Since the major problem of the Kenyan peasants is to regain their land from the colonialists and later from the post-independence black elite, these first paragraphs indicate what is to be the primary theme in Ngugi's novels--the spiritual and material importance of land to the tribe. However, the stress on the relationship of the people to the land changes throughout his works. In the case of The River Between, the land is seen in a mythological relationship to the peasants, providing a polarity for the Christian mythology which has divided the tribe since the invasion of the colonialists. W.J. Howard points out that Ngugi's attempt to integrate textually the Christian and Gikuyu myths raises to a "cosmic level" the preoccupation with the disintegration of tribal life, thus reflecting the breakdown of the "commonly understood, ordered, social and religious cosmos."[12]

In dealing with the problems of colonial invasion, tribal disintegration, and the loss of lands on the level of a philosophical problem, Ngugi acknowledges neither national nor class lines.

The peoples' awareness of their roots in the land, as displayed in The River Between, resembles the basically sensual understanding of the world on which the black literary movement of Négritude is based. The sense of nostalgia for the rural tradition, which sees the land as the source of all life, and which is typical of Négritude,[13] finds expression in Ngugi's novel. Speaking of the Gikuyu tribe he says:

> These were the people whose blood and bones spoke the language of the hills. The trees listened, moaned with the wind, and kept silent. Bird and beast heard and quietly listened. Only sometimes would they give a rejoinder, joyful applause or angry roar.[14]

The ritual encounter of earth and life is repeated in the major symbol of the book: the river. In Négritude poetry the river is also an important symbol. It stands for the flow of time and life while representing the continuity of the black culture. The vital primal force symbolized by the river flows forward eroding the obstacles of colonialism and exploitation. The river in the story is called Honia or "bring-back-to-life" because it is a never ceasing source of life for the valley. On the first page it is described as joining the two ridges, the inhabitants of which become locked in conflict with each other as the novel progresses. From the first to the last pages of the novel the river remains a solid symbol of unity in the midst of conflict.

Ngugi's use of the themes and symbols of Négritude suggests that in The River Between his Weltanschauung is neither an emotional or an intellectual expression of any form of Marxism:

> To equate Négritude with Marxism . . . is to misunderstand its dynamics, for though embracing an essentially egalitarian principle, it is marked by an all pervasive racial consciousness, which contains the power, by its active combatant spirit, to destroy global racism. . . . Emotion is its primary impulse.[15]

Yet Ngugi communicates the idea that an essential unity with nature is a force upon which the native people can draw in their suffering under the colonial system.

The major conflict in the Gikuyu society expressed in The River Between is the antagonism between traditional customs and Christianity, an antagonism which peaks when Muthoni dies due to the tribal custom of female circumcision. However, the influence of Christianity on Ngugi's thought is most evident in the saviour pattern on which the characterization of the hero Waiyaki is based:[16]

> I tell you again, Learn all the wisdom of the white man. And keep on remembering salvation shall come from the hills. A man must rise and save the people in their hour of need. He shall show them the way; he shall lead them.[17]

Waiyaki's belief in his role as saviour of the tribe manifests itself in his faith in his own power as educator, which was instilled in him by his father. He sees education as a means of counteracting the white man's influence on tribal life. The hero's dedication to the building of schools for the district, in opposition to the mission school at Siriana, is a duty he executes in the service of his people. This dedication is described, in keeping with the saviour motif, as a sacrifice:

> The elders did not pay him much. He did not mind. This was a part of the sacrifice. Later they would feel grateful.[18]

Inevitably, Waiyaki will fail in the mission he undertakes. Personal rivalry, and dissension within the tribe, eventually force the hero to renounce his rôle as saviour. At the end of the novel, the overcoming of barriers between the Christians and traditionalists within the tribe is signalled by the love affair between Waiyaki and Nyambura (the daughter of Joshua, the leader of the Christian faction). This integration symbolizes another type of individual, transcendent solution to the problems of the Gikuyu people. As W.J. Howard notes, Nyambura "frees the saviour image from the tribal, Christian, educational or political biases and projects it onto the humane sphere of free response."[19] In this novel, a harmony between the tribe and life itself can be achieved only on a purely metaphysical level.

In The River Between, Ngugi moves from an attempt to fit the central Christian doctrine of the saviour to the traditional beliefs of the Gikuyu people, to a discovery that this synthesis is irrelevant to the problems of the natives,[20] They do not need to learn and tolerate the whiteman's ways. The educational system developed for the Gikuyu tribe should be used for a higher purpose than to tailor the colonizer's system to fit the world of the blacks, which would unite the tribe in a peaceful fashion, but would leave them at the mercy of the stronger colonial powers:

> All at once he [Waiyaki] felt more forcefully than he had ever felt before the shame of a people's land being taken away, the shame of being forced to work on these same lands, the humiliation of paying taxes for a government you knew nothing about.[21]

Waiyaki realizes that education should be used to unify the people in order to encourage the struggle for socio-economic freedom. Yet Ngugi does not show Waiyaki's ideas developing into a plan for practical, concrete action. In The River Between Waiyaki is conscious of political problems, but he is unable to realize any change in the social order. This failure is the result of a Weltanschauung which, as mentioned above, attempts to transcend ideological considerations and approach problems on an individual and a philosophical basis. Waiyaki's inability to resolve the conflict between the individual, metaphysical approach to the Gikuyu problems and his awareness of the need for national freedom from social and economic oppression is not so much a failure as an indication of a political consciousness only beginning to awaken. Yet throughout the story there is an emotional understanding of human unhappiness due to the colonial situation, which promises that the suffering will eventually be seen in its full social context.

Ngugi's second novel, Weep Not Child (1964), depicts the misery of the Gikuyu peasants during the 1952 Emergency in Kenya, in a style of "progressive historical realism."[22] The events are related through the eyes of the child Njoroge, the son of Ngotho, who is a poor peasant forced to labour on the land of a rich black man to obtain a meagre living. At the beginning of the story Njoroge is given a rare and much desired chance to attend school and, as in The River Between, much stress is laid on the importance of education as a means by which the black people can achieve a better life. In this book Ngugi clearly indicates that he realizes such hopes are false. A black skin reduces a human being to the level of the colonizers' servant no matter what his education or his economic status may be. Jacobo, the black landowner, serves the colonialists despite his ability to employ many labourers and to build a big house. Even though he realizes that blacks always remain inferior to whites in the colonial situation, Ngugi also indicates an understanding that suffering comes not only as a result of having a black skin but also as a result of belonging to a certain class:

> Blackness is not all that makes a man. . . . There are some people, be they black or white, who don't want others to rise above them. They want to be the source of all knowledge and share it piecemeal to others less endowed. That is what's wrong with all those carpenters and men who have a certain knowledge. It is the same with rich people. A rich man does not want others to get rich because he wants to be the only man with wealth.[23]

Ngugi returns to the idea of knowledge as the source of power, but here it is defined as the power of a class.

Yet in Weep Not Child Ngugi's view of the Kenyan people's problems as those of class is subordinated to an examination of how the problems of the national struggle for independence, and the actions of the Mau Mau fighters, affect the lives of the characters in the book. The strike against Mr. Howlands, the white landowner, is viewed in terms of its effect on the family of Ngotho. Fanon's theory of the spontaneous, but nonetheless disciplined uprisings of the peasantry as the strength of the nationalist struggle[24] is illustrated at the meeting held in order to call the strike where Ngotho takes spontaneous action against Jacobo, a black man betraying the black people. Ngugi does not pursue this line of analysis; but instead he turns to an examination of the implications of Ngotho's action in personal terms. Ngotho loses both his home on Jacobo's land and his job. Forced to live in great poverty for the rest of his life, he loses all sense of dignity and worth as a human being. The violent Mau Mau struggle, an even stronger manifestation of spontaneous black nationalism, is treated by Ngugi in the same manner. Participation in Mau Mau is seen solely as the grief experienced at the loss of a son or brother without a full explanation of its relevance to the political struggle. Ngugi depicts the perplexity, misery, and fear of Jacobo's daughter Mwihaki in the face of the social destruction that surrounds her. The only explanation that she can find for the situation is that people have sinned in the eyes of God. Although it is clear Ngugi cannot accept this explanation, he does not attempt to provide another one.

Only one section of the novel gives a clear view of the violence of the political situation in which the characters in the novel participate. This occurs in the exchange between Mr. Howlands and Boro, Njoroge's brother and a Mau Mau fighter:

> I killed Jacobo.
> I know.
> He betrayed black people. Together you killed many sons of the land. You raped our women. And finally you killed my father. Have you anything to say in your defence?
> Nothing.
> Nothing. Now you say nothing. But when you took our ancestral lands--.
> This is my land. Mr. Howlands said this as a man would say, this is my woman.
> Your land! Then, you white dog, you'll die on your land.[25]

The spirit of black nationalism and violence speaks clearly in these lines, but it is a nationalism which, in the context of Weep Not Child, is only one among many of the problems in the "human condition." It is not a militant call to political action but a cry from the heart of mortal suffering.

With the publication of his third novel, A Grain of Wheat (1967), the subject of Ngugi's writing changes. He deals directly with the Kenyan struggle for independence and the Mau Mau fighters. A belief that Ngugi expressed earlier in an essay, that "violence in order to change an unjust social order is not savagery: it purifies man,"[26] becomes apparent in this book. The Mau Mau fighters, and the peasants who aid them, exemplify a collective form of the hero in this novel. The pattern of hero as saviour seen in his earlier writings is, in this text, treated ironically, particularly in the person of Kihika, one of the most feated and admired of the freedom fighters. The black Messiah is no longer above the people, he is one of them. In his life in the forests, and in his attacks on the guard posts, Kihika never fails to carry his Bible with him, yet the passages he underlines are peculiarly suited to the Mau Mau struggle. One such passage is:

> And the Lord spoke unto Moses
> Go unto Pharoah, and say unto him,
> Thus saith the Lord,
> Let my people go.[27]

Another section underlined in red reads:

> He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. For he shall deliver the needy when he cometh; the poor also and he that hath no helper.[28]

These passages indicate that the Christian hypocrisy of the colonizers is being turned against them by the blacks. The Mau Mau fighters and Kihika, who collectively represent the black Moses, act in the vengeful spirit of the Old Testament to liberate the poor and oppressed. Kihika "purifies" the Christian religion by returning to its basic principles and using them as a guide in the struggle for independence.

To Ngugi, the Mau Mau terrorism is not indiscriminate violence as with the violence of the white man, Mr. Robson, but it is a justifiable way of countering the violence of the whites against the blacks: the merciless torture of men such as Mugo in the prison camps and the torture of the inhabitants of the villages. As Frantz Fanon notes:

> . . . le colonialisme n'est pas une machine à penser, n'est pas un corps doué de raison. Il est la violence à l'état de nature et ne peut s'incliner que devant une plus grande violence.[29]

The violent methods of the Mau Mau are methods of desperation and show their willingness to face death--to place the cause of freedom above all else. Ngugi articulates Kihika's dedication to the cause in the confrontation between Kihika and Wambuku, his lover. Realizing that she will probably lose Kihika to the political struggle, Wambuku angrily replies that "it is not politics, Wambuku . . . it is life. Is he a man who lets another take away his land and freedom? Has a slave life?"[30] Kihika's response is an emotional one, but it is also an indication of a strong, pragmatic commitment, on an individual level, to a cause which extends beyond the individual to include a whole nation and a whole race.

Ngugi's analysis of the independence struggle is a historical one. However, in A Grain of Wheat he moves back and forth between the past and the present, placing one time in the perspective of another. Ngugi does not directly mention the political situation in post-independence Kenya. Instead, he hints that certain problems could arise under the new government. As Gikonyo runs in the race on Independence

Day his thoughts turn with uncertainty to the form of life in the new Kenya:

> Would Uhuru bring the land into African hands? And would that make a difference to the small men in the village. . . . He traversed the wide field of his childhood, early manhood, romance with Mumbi; Kihika, the Emergency, the detention camps. . . .[31]

The uncertainty on Gikonyo's part is due not merely to a lack of knowledge about the terms of Kenyatta's negotiations with the British over the Kenyan constitution, but also because he is uncertain of how the country's new socio-economic structure will develop. The sacrifices made by the Mau Mau and the peasants have helped achieve racial equality, but they have not accomplished a radical change in the whole system. Before independence Gikonyo manages to acquire a five acre plot of land and to become a relatively prosperous middle-man selling maize and beans, but he cannot escape from the uncertainty of the situation. Gikonyo has already been thwarted in an attempt to set up a cooperative farm with five other men, by a black M.P. who bought the land himself instead of obtaining the loan promised the men. This incident is an example of how the peasants are cheated of their rights.

At the Ujuru celebration General R. gives an impassioned speech about the goals of the Mau Mau rebellion:

> You asked why we fought, why we lived in the forest with wild beasts. You asked why we killed and spilt blood. The whiteman went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil in which grew coffee, tea, pyrethrum, and sisal? Who dug the roads and paid the taxes? . . . He who was not on our side was against us. That is why we killed our black brothers. Because, inside, they were whitemen. And I know even now this war is not ended. Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools?

> Let therefore these things be done now, for we do not want another war . . . no more blood in my . . . in these our hands. . . .[32]

All nationalist leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta refused to identify with the Mau Mau during the independence struggle. General R.'s speech foreshadows the troubles which were to come when Kenyatta assumed leadership of Kenya. Writing in 1966, at a time when Oginga Odinga, leader of the leftist faction in Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union (KANU), had broken with the party to create the Kenya People's Union (KPU), in order to oppose the centralized, powerful, and rich KANU, Ngugi criticizes the present in the words of the hero of the past. The KPU, which wanted a more "scientific" application of socialism in the Kenyan government, criticized the slow process of land redistribution, and encouraged a realignment in governmental policy towards Communist countries. In A Grain of Wheat General R.'s initial could stand for Russia, so Ngugi's use of the character to criticize Kenyatta's policies is highly appropriate.

Further evidence of Ngugi's ideological understanding and political sympathies appears in the talk of the men in the detention camps:

> The men drew out plans of action after detention. They discussed education, agriculture, government, and Gatu had elaborate stories for all these subjects. For instance, he told them a wonderful story of what once happened in Russia where the ordinary man, even without a knowledge of how to read, write, or speak a word of English was actually running the government. And now all the nations of the earth feared Russia.[33]

Ngugi is not offering the example of socialism in Russia as a guide to the Mau Mau fighters, but to the nation of Kenya in 1966, where so-called nationalist socialism failed to alleviate social and economic oppression. As in the speech given by General R., Ngugi's goal in his writing is to veil the suggestion for political direction in the present in a subject matter which embraces the past.

The fact that at the time of writing A Grain of Wheat Ngugi was afraid to speak out freely about his sympathies with the Soviet Union is, possibly, a result of Kenyatta's opposition to any such tendencies--an attitude which eventually resulted in the banning of the KPU. Such censorship precludes the possibility of a clear analysis of the historical situation presented in A Grain of Wheat, although Ngugi's method of dealing with ideology in terms of the effect of social conditions on the individual, as evidenced in his earlier novels, also prevents complete clarity on this point.

However, in Petals of Blood, published in 1977, and written between 1970 and 1975, Ngugi's political stand is readily apparent, for he depicts the tiny village of post-independence Ilmorog in its growth from a backward rural area, caught in the poverty of a devastating drought, to its development by a group of black industrialists, financed by foreign aid, who completely destroy the rural traditions of the peasant population. The book begins with the arrest of Karega, a trade union leader, on the suspicion of the murder of a "leading industrialist" and two directors of a brewery company. Marching on the police station, the workers of Ilmorog shout in protest at the arrest:

> Murder of the workers! somebody retorted.
> Murder of the worker's movement!
> Long live the worker's struggle!

> Please disband--appealed the officer, desperately.
> Disband yourself . . . disband the tyranny of the foreign companies and their local messengers.
> Out with foreign rule policed by colonized blackskins.
> Out with exploitation of our sweat![34]

The cries of the Kenyan workers confirm the prophetic words of General R. in A Grain of Wheat. The war has not ended. An independent Kenya has left the masses of the people without land, without food, and without freedom. As the story of the development of the next stage in the political struggle Petals of Blood shows, through flash-backs, the roots of the contemporary battle in the situation in pre-independence Kenya. Abdulla fought with the Mau Mau and Karega's brother lost his life while a member of this group. Munira, through his family background, is a product of the colonialists' drive to Christianize and conquer, and Wanja has been physically exploited, as a woman, by both the white and black communities. The careful development of a historical context, in terms of events in the lives of the various characters, concretizes the circumstances of life in Ilmorog. Thus plot and characterization have a definitive, historical base from which Ngugi can develop an ideological analysis of the situation.

Not only does Ngugi move backward and forward in time in order to establish the political situation, he also moves the action back and forth between the rural area, Ilmorog, and the urban area, Nairobi. The decision of the Ilmorog peasants to make the journey from the village to the city, in order to ask their M.P. for relief from the drought, is provoked by Karega and Wanja. Wanja says:

> I think we should go. It is our turn to make things happen. There was a time when things happened the way we in Ilmorog wanted them to happen. . . . But there

> came a time when this power was taken from us. . . .
> They would send trains from out there. They ate our forests. What did they give us in return? Then they sent for our men. They went on swallowing our youth. Ours is only to bear in order for the city to take. . . . We must surround the city and demand back our share. . . . But Ilmorog must go as one voice.[35]

Wanja's speech which spurs the inhabitants of Ilmorog to action against the M.P. in the city, sets up a polarity between the city and the village, thus implying a polarity between the proletariat and the peasantry. Nairobi is seen as the source of all that is evil, while Ilmorog must bear the brunt of that evil. Although distrust of the urban life is a common literary theme, Wanja's inclusion of the city in a negative category is consistent with Fanon's analysis of the role of the comparatively privileged proletariat in Africa:

> Dans les pays colonisés le prolétariat a tout à perdre. Il représente en effet la fraction du peuple colonisé nécessaire et irremplaçable pour la bonne marche de la machine coloniale. . . . Ce sont ces éléments qui constituent la clientèle la plus fidèle des parties nationalistes et qui par la place privilégiée qu'ils occupent dans le système colonial constituent la fraction "bourgeoise" du peuple colonisé.[36]

According to Fanon, in the neo-colonial system, the section of natives who manage to turn colonialism to their account under the old order, retain the bourgeois values of the colonizers, resulting in the continuing exploitation of the rural masses who are isolated from the centre of power and therefore have trouble defending themselves.

As if to prove the thesis of the negative role of the city in relation to the rural area, the trip to Nairobi by the people of Ilmorog only causes Mr. Nderi, the M.P., to imagine that he has political rivals who have stirred the people to action. However, due to newspaper publicity, ineffective offers of help pour in: church leaders offer to build a church, government officials send in a District Officer, and a group of university students write a study of the area relating drought to the uneven development of neo-colonialism and calling for the immediate abolition of capitalism. Mr. Nderi, on the other hand, in order to defeat his imagined political enemies, carries forward a highly effective scheme of development, a financial project called Ilmorog (KCO) Investment and Holdings Limited. Nderi's scheme turns the village into a town and the inhabitants of the village go so deeply into debt that they are forced to sell their holdings to the neo-colonialists from the city, who are in partnership with an American combine. Shopping centres, banks, and breweries spring up and the peasants are driven from the land to find employment as workers in the New Ilmorog. The influence of the neo-colonial elite spreads from Nairobi to embrace the people and the land of a previously isolated village.

But in the final analysis, Ngugi uses Petals of Blood to make a point about political strategy which reverses the negative aspect of Ilmorog's development into an urban, industrialized setting. Karega's return to Ilmorog, after gaining experience with the trade unions on the docks of Mombasa, shows his developing awareness of the division of labour under the capitalist system:

> A worker has no particular home. . . . He belongs everywhere and nowhere. I get a job here, I do it. . . . I carry my only property--my labour power, my hands--everywhere with me. Willing buyer . . . a seller who must sell. . . . It is the life under this system.[37]

After working for some time in the Theng'eta Breweries, and observing the disunity among the workers, Karega is able to determine a course of action to improve the lot of the workers, which is based upon his understanding of the system of labour. Karega publishes pamphlets which incite the brewery workers to form a union and this in turn causes other labourers throughout the town to build unions. Through strikes and other measures, the Ilmorog workers become a strong force. Karega's organization of the workers presupposes that the proletariat will be the leader of the struggle against the system which oppresses the natives while the peasants and traders will follow their lead. Karega does not see the peasants, and the small landowners as an independent force. This is apparent in his discussions with Abdulla:

> I [Abdulla] thought he was going too far in overstretching the importance of worker's solidarity aided by small farmers. What about the unemployed? The small traders? I believed . . . that land should be available to everybody. . . . But he always argued . . . that workers as a force were on the increase and were the people of the future. . . .[38]

Even though ninety percent of the Kenyan population is rural, Karega sees revolutionary strength in terms of the proletariat; thus the development of Ilmorog into an industrial centre is a positive step, for it lays down the objective preconditions for a revolution. Ngugi's stance moves away from a Fanon influenced bias towards a rural base for revolution, a stance which he appears to uphold in A Grain of Wheat.

Ngugi's acceptance of the necessity of proletarian revolution is particularly apparent in the final pages of Petals of Blood. Ngugi mentions that Joseph, Abdulla's adopted son reads Ousmane's novel God's Bits of Wood as well as the works of Lenin and Mao. He also reads about the history of the workers' and peasants' revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, and other places. The mention of the Marxist writings as well as the socialist revolutions in various countries indicates Ngugi's political interests. The extent of his conversion to Marxism is apparent in his depiction of Karega. When Karega is informed of his mother's death, his grief grows from a personal feeling to an expression of class solidarity which causes him to sympathize with the misfortunes of "all the Mariamus of Kenya, of neo-colonial Africa . . . of all the men, women, and children still weighed down by imperialism."[39] Karega integrates personal emotion with political beliefs, indicating that he has reached the highest stage in the development of a socialist consciousness. The psychological unfolding of Karega's character is not completed. Instead he becomes the prototype of the socialist hero at the end of the novel--the one-dimensional figure capable of leading the proletarian revolution.

The final paragraphs of the novel, which follow Karega's train of thought after he learns about the upcoming workers' strike, are written in a style reminiscent of fundamentalist religious pamphlets and socialist agitational literature:

> Imperialism: capitalism: landlords: earthworms. A system that bred hoards of round-bellied jiggers and bedbugs with parasitism and cannibalism as the highest goal in society. This system and its profiteering gods and its ministering angels had hounded his mother to her grave. . . . Tomorrow it would be the workers and peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system and all its prying bloodthirsty gods and gnomic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the

> few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. Then, only then, would the kingdom of man and woman really begin, they joying and loving in creative labour. . . .[40]

The death of capitalism and the construction of socialism is compared to the destruction of false gods and the coming of the millenium. Ngugi writes in a style consistent with this comparison, using political and religious slogans to formulate the conclusion of Petals of Blood.

Ngugi's growing class consciousness, seen in the difference between the book published in 1967 and Petals of Blood published in 1977, is also apparent in an essay which first appeared in 1969:

> Class consciousness, transcending the vertical divisions of clan and tribe, would make the workers and peasants realize they are all in a similar predicament. But up till now it has been stifled by nationalistic sentiments.[41]

The Gikuyu tribe, one of the largest in Kenya, owns most of the lands and provides most of the members of parliament in post-independence Kenya. This fact provokes resentment among the rest of the Kenyan people even though the Gikuyu themselves are divided by ethnic and generational cleavages. Ngugi believes that the divisions within the Gikuyu tribe and the unification of all classes in Kenya under the slogan of nationalism hides the real problems which would provoke class struggle. Writing at a time when Kenya was developing an alignment with the United States, in opposition to the Communist bloc, Ngugi calls for a growth in class consciousness in the hope of awakening the Kenyan people to the dangers of American expropriation of their industries. This view is exemplified in Petals of Blood by the mention of American business holdings in Kenya. Ngugi's fear of the development of close economic ties with America was realized in 1976, one year after he finished writing the novel, when the socialist country of Tanzania closed its borders to Kenya and the United States supplied Kenya with fighter aircraft to counterbalance Soviet aid to the neighbouring Uganda and Somalia. The example of Karega and his fight for a proletarian based trade union system, is the outcome of Ngugi's belief that the writer must attempt to give "moral direction and vision"[42] to the revolutionary struggle.

Ngugi's development as a novelist moves towards a clearly defined political stance in Petals of Blood and his aesthetic development is consistent with the political evolution. His artistic capabilities, however, are considerably influenced by his training in the western literary tradition. Nazareth notes that Ngugi chose Joseph Conrad's writings as the subject of his study at Makerere University, and he traces the aesthetic characteristics of A Grain of Wheat to Conrad's influence on Ngugi.[43] Eustace Palmer suggests that the novel is modeled on Conrad's Lord Jim with respect to its complexity of form,[44] while Adrian Roscoe believes that Ngugi is closer to Orwell than Conrad:

> . . . like Orwell he [Ngugi] is not a propagandist in the crude sense, but a committed literary artist, concerned about aesthetics, anxious to reflect beauty in the external world and in human experience through well-built prose.[45]

Roscoe believes Ngugi is a politically committed writer by accident of his situation; in another time and another place the development of aesthetic skills would have proved his first concern, but as his work stands, he has successfully fused artistic performance with certain political ideals. However, the contradiction between Ngugi's training in western, bourgeois aesthetics, and his attempt to suggest a socialist solution to the political problems of Kenya precludes the possibility of a completely satisfactory fusion.

In his last two novels, Ngugi not only depicts the political development of the situation in Kenya, he also attempts to probe the psychology of the individuals who act out the political process. In A Grain of Wheat Mugo is an example of a character forced to grapple with existential problems which arise from the conditions of the political struggle. When Kihika shelters in Mugo's hut, Mugo cannot decide if he should place himself in danger for the sake of Kihika. He is scarcely conscious of Kihika's political speeches and his decision to betray Kihika has a personal not a political basis: he is jealous:

> Kihika who had a mother and a father, and a brother, and a sister, could play with death. He had people who would mourn his end, who would name their children after him, so that Kihika's name would never die from men's lips. Kihika had everything; Mugo had nothing.[46]

Mugo's decision to confess his betrayal of Kihika is another personal action--not a political repentance. He is a man who has struggled within himself to overcome his guilt and, unable to absolve himself, sees a confession as the only means by which he can come to terms with his existence in the world.

In Petals of Blood Munira is placed in a situation similar to that of Mugo; he must try to come to terms with his responsibility to the society in which he lives. Karega seeks out Munira and reminds him of the world he is hiding from in Ilmorog, of his Christian upbringing, and of his inability to relate properly to his African roots. Yet Munira is a weak character in whom a selfish individualism predominates. Munira blocks Karega's attempts to teach the Ilmorog children the story of African history and culture, not out of a high minded idealism which adheres to the colonizer's system of education, but because of his tendency to live life in the easiest manner possible, which includes complete submission to the educational authorities. He has Karega dismissed from his teaching post, not because of his political beliefs, but because he is jealous of Wanja's love for Karega. Munira's descent into religious fanaticism is a final abrogation of individual responsibility, for in his world view all actions are made possible only through the will of Christ, rather than through that of man on earth. In the case of both Munira and Mugo there exists an existential struggle with the spectre of individual commitment and responsibility. Mugo succeeds; Munira fails. In neither case does Ngugi's skill at characterization properly convey the powerful motivations under which Mugo and Munira act. The political actions of the characters are only circumstantially related to their personal development. Ngugi does not integrate the unique expression of character with an individual consciousness of the general problems of the place and the time. Characterization is lost amidst the primary theme of the novels, the politics of independence and liberation. Ngugi does not utilize his characterization of class enemies to emphasize the difficulties of Mugo's and Munira's situation, a technique one might expect in socialist literature. Both the white colonialists and the black capitalists are flat, undeveloped characters and thus do not contrast with the positive potential in Mugo and Munira.

Ngugi's depiction of romantic relationships, a theme used to provide structural unity in the four novels discussed above, suffers from an attempt to impose a picture of the relations of love and sex prevailing in a western, industrialized society, onto a culture to which they are not suited. As one anthropologist has noted:

> If a visitor to a primitive people remains among them for a long time . . . he will soon discover that while there may be plenty of love-making, there is seldom anything corresponding to what we mean by romantic love. Love, some South African natives complained before a government commission, was introduced among them by Europeans.[47]

In the midst of the Mau Mau struggle and the ordeals of the men in the detention camps, the depiction of Gikonyo and Mumbi's marital problems seems trite and overdone, a device to hold the reader's attention while Ngugi makes a political statement. The pattern of male dominance, female submission, man as possessor, woman as possessed, although a part of Gikuyu society where women have to work far harder at manual labour than men,[48] is depicted in a western fashion. When Gikonyo hits Mumbi, it is not in anger at her, but in anger with the M.P. who has cheated him of the land he intended to buy:

> A river runs along the line of least resistance. Gikonyo's resentment was directed elsewhere; it was only that Mumbi happened to be near.[49]

In a western manner the woman, within the family, becomes the object of frustrations which cannot be taken out on their true source: the inhumanity of the relations of capitalism which the working man must cope with in an industrialized system.[50]

Despite Gikonyo's anger, however, Mumbi is also described as the core of his existence; without her he will "live and die alone":[51]

> It was Mumbi, in bed, her head on his breast, or breathing near him, who had taught him, who had made him understand there was nothing like the touch of a woman. What was there beyond this touch, this communion, which, for him, had given life a meaning, a clarity?[52]

Yet Mumbi remains an object of possession, a commodity, a situation which manifests itself in a sexual sense in Gikonyo's jealousy of Karanja. Because he thinks he has lost the dominant sexual position in Mumbi's life (a position which enables him to compensate for his position as a servant of the bourgeoisie), Gikonyo is driven mad with rage at the thought of Mumbi making love to Karanga:

> . . . the image of Mumbi moaning with pleasure as her naked body bore Karanga's heavy weight, corroded him everywhere. He recreated the scene in its sordid details . . . the images did not stop corroding his mind. Karanja on top of Mumbi. . . . The woman who had sighed under Karanja's sweating body could not live.[53]

Even in Gikonyo's imagination, Mumbi's sexuality is reduced to the level of objectification--she is possessed by another man. He cannot see the act as one in which Mumbi possesses the man, or as one completely lacking the element of possession. Not only is Mumbi possessed, she is also depicted in a graphically submissive role, beneath the man. This is a position in sexual relations, usually detrimental to the full satisfaction of the woman,[54] which was not a common posture for the performance of the sexual act among the natives at the time of the arrival of the white man in Africa.[55] Ngugi's emphasis on romantic attachments in general, with the implication of the position of woman as commodity peculiar to western industrialized society, conflicts with the main theme of the story, the peasant's revolutionary struggle in the Third World. It is not surprising that, in a novel written from the point of view of the peasants, Ngugi's imposition of a vision of woman as a commodity in love relationships, on a story about the Mau Mau struggle, does not succeed.

In his novels Ngugi attempts to achieve a balance between a westernized version of aesthetic creation and a political vision with some practical relevance to the Kenyan situation. The difficulty of achieving such a balance is apparent in the novels where the depiction of the existential struggles of the characters rest uneasily on the framework of a story about violent political upheaval. Psychological character studies which arise from the western preoccupation with the "human condition" have little relevance to Mao's suggestions regarding the proper depiction of human oppression. He believes that literature should also provide revolutionary propaganda and that the writer should therefore:

> . . . produce works which awaken the masses, fire them with enthusiasm and impel them to unite and struggle to transform the environment.[56]

Instead, Ngugi analyzes character and emphasizes the individualism inherent in capitalist society. Although this contradicts his stated belief that the writer should think in terms of the workers and peasants rather than the individual, individualism remains an inescapable characteristic of his literary production, which detracts from the political uses of his work.[57]

Yet all four of Ngugi's novels follow Mao's dictum that the life of the peasants should provide the "raw materials" for literature.

The suffering of the Kenyan peasants under the colonial invasion, the disappearance of traditional tribal society, the violent struggle for independence, and the attempt to escape from economic and social oppression provide vivid subject matter. Ngugi's handling of the material, however, caters to an educated elite, trained to appreciate the western aesthetic tradition. In a country with a population of approximately ten million, with only two thousand students at the one major university, and where only forty to forty-eight percent of the school age children attend school it is unlikely there will be any universal understanding of Ngugi's literary techniques. For example, although the simple prose of Weep Not Child is lacking in stylistic sophistication, the Christian symbolism in The River Between, particularly that of the hero as saviour, would not be evident to the African reader who could not understand Biblical symbolism. The careful development of image patterns which unite this novel, as in the image of the rift valley which is a metaphor for the tribal dissension existing throughout Kenya, would not be immediately apparent to a reader uninitiated in the western literary tradition. In Petals of Blood Ngugi uses the city as a symbol on two levels. It stands for the forces of material and spiritual evil as well as for a negative social situation. However, Fanon's European influenced political ideas affect Ngugi's attitude towards the city, which appears semi-symbolically in most of his texts.

Peter Nazareth notes that some of Ngugi's narrative techniques in A Grain of Wheat are derived from those of Joseph Conrad; the story moves backwards and forwards to indicate the social and psychological links between characters.[58] The narrative voice and point of view change throughout the novel. Although the narrator's voice deals with historical facts, the perspective quickly shifts from one character's point of view to another. He gives several viewpoints equal emphasis thereby creating a collective vision of the world of the Gikuyu peasants. Mugo is the story's protagonist, but with the internal development of his character, Ngugi can depict a man of ordinary weakness and strength. Instead of creating a hero who the reader can emulate as a positive example in a socially productive fashion, in the tradition of Socialist Realism, Ngugi depicts a character with whom the reader can passively identify--in both a positive and a negative sense. The skilful employment of narrative voice, as well as the use of the interior monologue to develop a psychologically realistic portrayal of Mugo's inner turmoil, indicates the degree to which Ngugi derives his skills from the western literary tradition.

The intellectual and aesthetic level on which Ngugi functions may be due to the fact that in Kenya one cannot presuppose the existence of a strong socialist party and, therefore, of a cultural army to direct literature along a revolutionary line. Ngugi is forced to determine, individually, the ideological course to follow in his writing. As is evident from the analysis of his four novels, Ngugi's development of a socialist attitude towards Kenyan politics is a slow process with many digressions, before he reaches the final page of Petals of Blood, a denunciation of capitalism, and an expression of solidarity with the proletarian struggle. Ngugi's bias against the independent force of the peasantry in revolution, as it is suggested by Mao in "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," indicates his acceptance of a western, industrialized version of the revolution. This attitude occurs despite the predominance of a rural population in Kenya and the important role of the peasantry in the Mau Mau guerrilla warfare which shows their ability in spontaneous, but disciplined organization.

As a writer, Ngugi has lost contact with his peasant roots. Although he comes from a Kenyan peasant family, Ngugi attended undergraduate school at Makerere University in Kenya. His graduate work was done at Leeds University in England under the supervision of Arnold Kettle. In spite of the training he received from the western system of education, Ngugi changed his name to its native form, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, to indicate his solidarity with the Kenyan people in their struggle against the neo-colonialists. Homecoming (1972) is his first major publication under his new name. However, Ngugi's western education, his period of study in the Soviet Union, and his occupation as a writer attempting to live up to western aesthetic standards, while also providing a vision of revolution, has distanced him from the real situation of the Kenyan peasants. Thus he is unable to create a "Maoist" revolutionary literature. Ngugi does not really "understand the people and know them well."

Mao says that the writer should:

> . . . draw nourishment from the masses to replenish and enrich themselves so that their specialities do not become "ivory towers," detached from the masses and from reality and devoid of content or life.[59]

Although one cannot say that Ngugi's novels are devoid of content or life, they do retain a certain "ivory tower" aspect. His works do not "popularize" in the sense of communicating a revolutionary message to the masses. To understand his works on a political basis, and to grasp his class stand, calls for a knowledge of the nuances of socialist, nationalist theory beyond the reach of the average Kenyan peasant. In a country with a group of intellectuals educated in a western tradition this type of literary production is virtually inevitable despite the intellectual's sympathy with the revolutionary cause. Ngugi was in jail without trial for co-authoring with Ngugi wa Mirii the play Ngahiika Ndenda about a tenant farmer who loses his holdings to the landlords, which the Kenyan government banned after a few performances.[60] His incarceration may be due to the fact that Ngugi's socialist writing, while not likely to provoke a revolution in Kenya, proved to be enough of an irritation to Kenyatta's authoritarian government that it was felt his dissident voice had to be silenced.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

[1] Ralph Parker, "The Afro-Asian Writers Conferences," New World Review, Jan. 1959, pp. 16-21.

[2] "Chairman Mao's Talks--Guiding Light for the Cultural Revolution of the World's People; Seminar of the Afro-Asian Writer's Bureau," Peking Review, 9 June 1967, pp. 16-20.

[3] Ngugi read Fanon while studying at Leeds University in 1964; see Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. ix; one critic notes that "the African peasant remains impervious to Fanon, whose name is unknown to him. The African elites turn their backs; they do not wish to hear what he had to say": see David Caute, Fanon, Modern Masters (London: Fontana, 1970), p. 91.

[4] W.J. Howard, "Themes and Development in the Novels of Ngugi," The Critical Evaluation of African Literature, ed. Edgar Wright (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 118-19.

[5] Eustace Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel (New York: African Pub. Corp., 1972), p. 11.

[6] Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from a Continent (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 88.

[7] Ime Ikkiddeh, "James Ngugi as Novelist," African Literature Today, No. 2 (1969), pp. 3-10.

[8] Adrian Roscoe, Uhuru's Fire: African Literature East to South (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 173.

[9] Ibid., p. 174.

[10] Peter Nazareth, An African View of Literature (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 151.

[11] James Ngugi, The River Between, African Writer's Series, 17 (London: Heinemann, 1965), p. 2.

[12] Howard, p. 98.

[13] Cartey, pp. 217-314.

[14] The River Between, p. 4.

[15] Kofi Awoonor, The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture, and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara (New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 156.

[16] For a full discussion of the saviour motif in the novel see W.J. Howard, p. 105.

[17] The River Between, p. 24.

[18] Ibid., p. 94.

[19] Howard, p. 106.

[20] For Ngugi's statement about his change in attitude as he wrote the novel see W.J. Howard, pp. 97-107.

[21] The River Between, p. 164.

[22] Howard, p. 108.

[23] James Ngugi, Weep Not Child, African Writer's Series, 7 (London: Heinemann, 1964), p. 24.

[24] Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre (Paris: François Maspéro, 1968), pp. 66-67.

[25] Weep Not Child, p. 145.

[26] Ngugi, Homecoming, p. 28.

[27] James Ngugi, A Grain of Wheat, African Writers Series, 36 (London: Heinemann, 1968), p. 29.

[28] Ibid., p. 22.

[29] Fanon, p. 25.

[30] A Grain of Wheat, p. 85.

[31] Ibid., p. 181.

[32] Ibid., pp. 191-92.

[33] Ibid., p. 94.

[34] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Petals of Blood, African Writer's Series, 188 (London: Heinemann, 1977). p. 4.

[35] Ibid., pp. 115-16.

[36] Fanon, p. 64.

[37] Petals of Blood, p. 291.

[38] Ibid., p. 320.

[39] Ibid., p. 342.

[40] Ibid., p. 344.

[41] James Ngugi, "Satire in Nigeria," Protest and Conflict in African Literature, ed. C. Pieterse and D. Munro (New York: Africana Pub. Corp., 1969), p. 58.

[42] Ngugi, Homecoming, p. 66.

[43] Nazareth, An African View of Literature.

[44] Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel.

[45] Roscoe, p. 175.

[46] A Grain of Wheat, p. 169.

[47] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, The Position of Women in Primitive Society and Other Essays in Social Anthropology (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 47.

[48] U.H. Ehrenfels, The Light Continent (London: Asia Pub. House, 1960), p. 45.

[49] A Grain of Wheat, p. 146.

[50] For a full discussion of woman as commodity within the capitalist family system, developing Engel's analysis in The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State, see Sheila Rowbothham, Woman's Consciousness, Man's World (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 49-66.

[51] A Grain of Wheat, p. 102.

[52] Ibid., p. 101.

[53] Ibid., p. 104.

[54] Shere Hite, The Hite Report (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 139-200.

[55] Alfred C. Kinsey, et al., Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male (London: W.B. Saunders and Co., 1948), pp. 373-74, 578-79.

[56] Mao Tse-Tung, Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), p. 20.

[57] Per Wastberg, The Writer in Modern Africa: African-Scandinavian Writer's Conference, Stockholm, 1967 (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968), p. 25.

[58] Nazareth, p. 132.

[59] Mao, Talks, p. 23.

[60] The Weekly Review, April 1978, pp. 5-6, cited in "Ngugi Disappears," Gar 32, April 1978, p. 2; "Announcements," African Literature Association Newsletter, 5, No. 1, p. 12.

CHAPTER III

SOCIALIST IDEAS IN THE NOVELS OF SEMBENE OUSMANE

In the examination of African socialist literature the diversity of African culture, and the variations in socio-economic development which resulted from the different colonial systems should be considered. British colonialism in Kenya did not provide for complete assimilation of any segment of the native population, but in Senegal the French colonialists followed a different policy, granting full citizenship to natives who attained a certain educational and cultural standard. This selective assimilation created a black elite which aided the colonizers in their attempt to keep the masses of the people under control. Despite the French policy of cultural assimilation and the post Second World War introduction of reformist measures, such as the abolishment of forced labour, and the conferring of citizenship on all peoples of French West Africa, the native population of Senegal remained equally oppressed as the Kenyan peasants and workers were under the British colonial system. For the majority of blacks in the two countries, black race was virtually synonymous with a low class standing and religious institutions with white dominated hierarchies provided a means of maintaining the status quo. In Senegal the Muslim imam or priests helped control the natives by extolling the virtues of the white man's civilization, just as the missionaries in Kenya encouraged an attitude of submissiveness by placing the control of the native life-style in the hands of their God, rather than in the hands of the people. Even after Kenya had been granted independence and Senegal had been recognized as an autonomous member of the French Community, both countries retained their colonial socio-economic base which made them dependent on western financing.

Therefore, the work of the Senegalese author Sembene Ousmane originates in material conditions similar to those which influence the writing of James Ngugi. The events in Ousmane's personal life, however, contribute to a perspective on culture and politics which is very different from that of Ngugi.[1] Ousmane was born in Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, and at the age of fifteen he began to work as a fisherman. He later attended the technical school in Marsassoum for three years before being drafted into the French colonial army in 1939. He served in Italy and Germany. After demobilization Ousmane returned to Senegal for a brief period and then travelled to France where he obtained work as a docker in Marseilles. While there, he began a self-directed study of black African literature, only to discover that this literature was dominated by non-African writers such as the Afro-Americans Richard Wright and Claude Mac Kay, and authors from the Antilles like René Maran, Damas, Jacques Roumains, and Aimé Césaire. The talented Senegalese writers Abdoulaye Sadji, Birago Diop, Socé Diop, and Léopold Senghor were virtually unknown in the European community. As a result of his study, Ousmane realized the necessity of promoting a wider knowledge of black African literature. During his stay in Marseilles, Ousmane became a member of the French Communist Party and a union leader of the African dock workers. Between 1950 and 1960 Ousmane travelled throughout Europe, visiting the Soviet Union in 1957 and the People's Republic of China and North Vietnam in 1958. Despite his knowledge of the European culture Ousmane, unlike Ngugi, is a self-educated man, experienced in practical revolutionary work and his writing is influenced ideologically and to a lesser extent aesthetically by the political perspective he developed during a ten year membership in the French Communist Party. This chapter will examine the aesthetic development of his major writings in relation to the political ideas expressed in his work.

The story of Ousmane's first novel Le Docker noir (1956) is partially based on the activities he participated in while living in France. Robert Cornevin calls the novel an autobiography,[2] while Hans M. Zell qualifies this statement suggesting that the story is "semi-autobiographical."[3] On the other hand, Donald E. Herdeck believes that Le Docker noir is the result of the "efforts and experiences" of living in Marseilles.[4] This suggestion would seem to be the most likely one as the events of Ousmane's life do not exactly parallel those of his hero in the novel, Diaw Falla. Le Docker noir is the story of a young man who works on the docks in Marseilles and who writes a novel in his spare time. He entrusts the manuscript of his book, entitled Le Dernier Voyage du négrier Sirius, to Ginette Fontisane, a young white woman with whom he has an affair. Ginette publishes the manuscript under her own name and receives a literary prize for the book. In an uncontrollable fit of rage at this deception

Falla murders Ginette, is arrested, and is sentenced to a lifetime of imprisonment and hard labour. Bernard Mouralis notes that Ousmane's first novel is "souvent mélodramatique et schématique dans les jugements qu'il portait mais la technique . . . était neuve."[5] Lamine Diakhaté suggests that the book's title seems to promise a message which the author fails to deliver; instead he drowns "un sujet . . . noble dans des considérations allant de l'obsession sexuelle du complexe d'infériorité."[6] Diakhaté would prefer Ousmane to deal with the problem of the atrocious material conditions in which the dockers exist and with the nobility of their struggle against all adversity. Both Mouralis and Diakhaté agree that Le Docker noir shows the uneven quality of a first novel, but also that it promises better work from the author in the future.

In spite of the schematic nature of the story and Ousmane's failure to create "un livre à thèse,"[7] the book's plot allows the writer to dwell briefly on various aspects of the discrimination encountered by black workers in France. The novel depicts problems endured by the black people as they struggle to live in a world where they are second class citizens. The socio-economic alienation of the blacks from the whites in France manifests itself in Diaw's relationship with Ginette. The difficulty of a love relationship between two persons of different cultures and different races finds expression in Diaw's words to Ginette:

> . . . essaie de me comprendre. Tu es celle qui me connaît le plus, et qui me comprend le moins. La vie n'est pas un roman, ni un écran de cinéma. . . . On est jeune, on se précipite sur elle, comme une personne assoiffée, à la vue d'une goutte d'eau. Dans sa hâte, elle l'écrase, l'illusion

> de cette goutte lui est enlevée, il ne la voit plus. . . . Que lui reste-t-il? Mourir de soif et rester allongé sur le sol. Voilà ce que font du mariage ces jeunes sans situation.[8]

Ginette's impetuous, romanticized attitude towards love, which derives from the western tradition, contrasts with the African attitude which reflects a more regulated social code for male-female relationships.

Ginette's attempt to force Diaw to conform to European standards of love and marriage is also a denial of his separate cultural identity. This theft of his individual rights in an emotional relationship is paralleled on a cultural level by the appropriation of his novel. Up to a certain point, Ginette's fraudulent publication of Diaw's manuscript is analogous to the white race's refusal to acknowledge the uniqueness of African culture both historically and in the present. Diaw's novel depicts the sufferings of his people on the last negro slave ship. The ship is caught in a storm and sinks, but at the moment of death racial differences are forgotten:

> Le conflit qui séparait blancs et noirs ne semblait plus exister. Il n'y avait plus de différence de langue, de croyance ou de peau. Tous avaient peur, peur de mourir. Dans cette crainte un fluide invisible les liait. Ils n'étaient plus des antagonistes, seul l'ouragan dominait.[9]

The horror of imminent death, instead of separating persons according to race, unites them with a common human bond. Diaw's novel shows that even the slaves were worthy of respect as human beings. Thus the historical myth of the inferiority of the black man is erased. By stealing the book and publishing it under her name, Ginette, the white woman, negates the black man's development of a unique historical perspective which allows him to take pride in his race. At the same time, she eliminates Diaw's claim to literary achievement in the present. But the suffering Ginette inflicts on the black people is material as well as mental. Since Diaw does not obtain the hoped for revenue from the book, he is unable to marry Catherine, the black girl who is pregnant with his child. As Diaw accuses Ginette:

> Tu as volé Catherine: Elle comptait sur ce livre pour qu'on se marie. . . . Elle est enceinte. . . . Tu as tout détruit.[10]

When Diaw is sentenced to imprisonment Catherine is forced to become a prostitute to support herself and her child. The theft of the novel becomes a symbol for the cultural oppression and material exploitation of the black people as a historical and a contemporaneous phenomenon.

The depiction of the relationship between Ginette and Diaw also shows the psychological alienation of the black man from the white woman. Before murdering Ginette, Diaw implies that her attitude towards him is the result of racial prejudice:

> "Sais-tu ce que c'est que vivre au jour le jour? Habiter un taudis? Trimer comme un nègre que je suis? Vendre son linge parce qu'on ne peut pas payer le prix de sa chambre? Se lever à l'aube pour rentrer le soir exténué, vidé, sans force? . . . Tu m'a pris pour un noir." Il avait fini par le dire. Le noir, pour lui signifiait l'ignorant, la brute, le niais. C'était plus qu'une lutte entre voleur et volé, deux races s'affrontaient, des siècles de haine se mesuraient.[11]

However, Diaw not only wants to convince Ginette he is her equal, he must also convince himself. His fear that the woman sees him as ignorant, stupid, and uncultured arises from his suspicion that he really is characterized by these qualities and that she is justified in perceiving him as "un noir." In a European world in which he develops only the most negative picture of his black identity Diaw has come to dislike himself. He feels that he is worthless and he attempts to determine his degree of worthlessness by testing Ginette's reactions to his words. Full communication with Ginette is impossible for Diaw because he is mentally confined by his negative self-image in the same manner that he is physically confined in a prison at the end of the story.

In Le Docker noir, Ousmane's analysis of the black man's alienation from the white woman is central to the novel, but because a personal problem is stressed as the major subject matter the situation of the black dock workers in Marseilles is seen only in a limited perspective. The book provides no scope for a historical analysis of the socio-economic situation of the worker. Ousmane's second novel O Pays, mon beau peuple! (1957), on the other hand, examines an interracial marriage in the African context, focusing on the larger socio-economic ramifications of the relationship as well as the individual ones. In this book personal struggle is much less important than class struggle, and the hero of the story, who has returned from eight years in Europe, is clearly concerned with improvement of the material conditions of the Senegalese peasantry.

In the year before the publication of his second novel, Ousmane injured his spine and was forced to give up manual labour. However, he retained a vital interest in the problems of the workers and peasants. As one critic notes:

> Les événements de sa vie réelle qu'on trouve en détails corrélatifs dans O Pays, mon beau peuple! vécus par son héros, son engagement à une idéologie révolutionnaire promarxiste, sa philosophie de l'humanisme prolétarien font de Sembene Ousmane un exemple du romancier qui a

> vécu un décalage avec son milieu traditionnel qui lui a donné une ouverture d'esprit aux problèmes du monde extérieur. Il est même possible de dire que seul un romancier de détermination extro-active peut créer un véritable héros extro-déterminé.[12]

As in his first novel, Ousmane writes about a subject he knows and understands from first-hand experience in accordance with the larger perspective gained from a comprehension of western culture. Bernard Mouralis believes that O Pays, mon beau peuple! shows a maturation in Ousmane's writing ability; "le style est plus simple que dans Le Docker noir et les jugements beaucoup plus nuancés."[13] Perhaps Ousmane's improvement in style accounts for the fact that the book was well received in France and translated into eight languages.[14] Several critics state that the main theme of the novel is that of the innovative youth at odds with the conservative Senegalese community,[15] but Francis Fouet adds that O Pays, mon beau peuple! is the only French African novel which links this theme of conflict with the theme of love.[16]

Oumar Faye, the hero of the novel, is depicted on a psychological level which deals with his personal conflicts and problems, as well as with his social relationships with the colonialists and with the Senegalese natives. On board the boat returning to Senegal, Oumar engages in a struggle with a colonialist who mistreats the black passengers. Oumar attacks him violently while the natives watch fearfully:

> Tels deux chiens, ils se toisaient furieusement. Les noirs n'en rêvaient pas. Quel était ce colosse qui s'attaquait au tabou? Ils n'en savaient rien. Frapper un blanc! Pour moins que cela des frères moisissaient en prison! Surgissant partout les occupants des cabines se demandaient: "Est-ce les nègres qui se révoltent?"[17]

For Oumar, however, the antagonism is not merely between the white race and the black race, it is also a battle between two strong men. The hero sees the assault on the natives as racial discrimination, but it is also an assault on his personal pride and dignity. Oumar's personal situation is further endangered when the same white man, Jacques, attempts to rape Isabelle, Oumar's wife. The attempt is the result of a white man's anger that his rightful property, a white woman, has become the sexual possession of a black man. There is only one way this situation can be made acceptable to Jacques. He feels he can reduce Isabelle to the same lowly status as her black husband when the stigma of rape is attached to her name. The colonizers want to violate Oumar's individual claim to his wife, as well as his political rights.

Regardless of his personal troubles, however, Oumar's main concern is with the economic struggle of his people. He believes it is his duty to help alleviate the difficult conditions under which they labour. As Oumar sees the women working on the docks carrying loads which are much too heavy for them, he reflects:

> C'était mal, c'était odieux que des femmes besognent de la sorte! Le fait que personne ne réagissait devant cet état de choses lui donnait une espèce de malaise. Il se savait responsable en partie de la somnolence du pays; lui non plus ne faisait rien.[18]

Oumar's willingness to assume responsibility, coupled with his level of ideological consciousness--apparent in his attempt to transport Marxist books into Senegal from France--[19] brings him into the realm of practical political action. As one critic suggests:

> Il représente, dans l'Afrique moderne, l'homme conscient de la nécessité des organisations sociales et économiques plus efficaces que la tribu ou le clan.[20]

Oumar acts on the basis of his understanding of socio-economic problems to produce concrete results which change the lives of the natives. A fisherman's child, Oumar opposes his parents' traditional expectations that he will follow in their footsteps. Instead he sets up a collective farm and builds a huge granary which will serve the farm.

The opposition of Oumar's relatives to his activities is part of the largely negative attitude towards tradition exhibited in the novel by Oumar's generation. Oumar is described in the following passage:

> Faye . . . avait parfaitement assimilé les modes de pensée, les réactions des blancs, tout en ayant conservé au plus profond de lui l'héritage de son peuple . . . il en était même venu à juger sans indulgence ses frères de race: leur sectarisme, leurs préjugés des castes qui semblaient rendre illusoire tout possibilité de progrès social. . . .[21]

Although this statement suggests that the hero has a deep attachment to his native heritage, in practice Oumar acts, for the most part, on the knowledge acquired during his stay in Europe. He sees the youth of the village as the source of new life for the Senegalese peasants and fishermen. Isabelle confirms his belief in a letter she writes home to France:

> Le noir nonchalant et oisif qui ne se soucie pas du lendemain est en train de disparaître peu à peu, au fur et à mesure que disparaissent les vieux, la jeunesse a l'air de mieux voir où elle veut aller.[22]

Unfortunately, Oumar makes no attempt to explain his ideas about the co-operative farm in a way that will be acceptable to members of his parents' generation, particularly to his father who is a Muslim imam and, therefore, violently opposed to his independent activities. Oumar is warned by one of his friends:

> Garde le fond de tes pensées pour toi. Tu te fais plus d'ennemis que d'amis; tes compatriotes ne sont pas comme tu voudrais qu'ils soient. Je comprends tout ce que tu m'as dit, et c'est la vérité, mais que puis-je faire? Le fardeau est trop lourd pour tes épaules. . . .[23]

Pierre understands all that Oumar tells him about the inevitable disintegration of the colonial situation and the necessity for economic development in the peasant society, but he is sceptical about Oumar obtaining the full support of the people.

In spite of Oumar's ambivalent relationship with the peasant population, however, his role as hero of the novel roots him firmly in the land of his people. S.O. Anozie suggests that "ce sentiment de grande solidarité avec la paysannerie prête à la personnalité de Faye la fière image de l'homo rusticus et un comportement d'excentrique."[24] Oumar is described by Ousmane in the following manner:

> Avec sa carrure athlétique, ses muscles saillants et ses attaches fines, il ressemblait à un totem d'ébène.[25]

The hero is a symbol of all that is magnificent in the native tradition as well as of a man of the earth who is unusual enough to provide much needed leadership. Oumar wants to find his dignity as a man in the country in which he was born and he must create the land anew in order to refashion his identity:

> Il se promenait seul à travers champs. . . . Il s'arrêtait devant une plante d'arachide pour en redresser les feuilles, libérait une mouche prise par une araignée . . . plus loin il séparait deux tiges de mil, étayait une hampe de maïs trop lourde. Seul devant son peuple qu'il voyait en imagination, aidé par le silence et la solitude, l'émotion le prenait, il parlait et il entendait la voix de son peuple qui lui répondait.[26]

Oumar is not an individualistic hero characteristic of the western tradition in literature. Instead, he is both of the people and separate from the people. In one man he embodies all the most positive traits found separately in the various individuals of the village.

The colonialists murder Oumar because he attempts to compete economically with them. It is not his marriage to a white woman, but the political and economic struggle that is the cause of his death. Oumar sacrifices his life but even after his death his actions are an inspiring example for the generations to come. Although Oumar makes some mistakes in his treatment of the people, including his lack of respect for their ancient traditions, his memory is honoured by the peasants:

> Ce n'était pas la tombe qui était sa demeure, c'était le coeur de tous les hommes et de toutes les femmes. Il était présent le soir autour du feu et le jour, dans les rizières; lorsqu'un enfant pleurait, sa mère lui racontait l'histoire de ce jeune homme qui parlait à la terre et, sous l'arbre de palabre, on honorait sa mémoire. Oumar n'était plus, mais son "Beau peuple" le chantait toujours.[27]

In the oral tradition of his people, Oumar's deeds will be recounted by the griots under the "tree of talk" to serve as an inspiration for the many generations to come.

While O Pays, mon beau peuple! is a novel which deals with one man's attempt to change the socio-economic order in a peasant village, Ousmane's third novel, Les Bouts de bois de dieu (1960), focuses on a specific political incident: the strike on the Dakar-Niger railway line (1947-48), in which Ousmane himself participated. Generally considered the central work of his "oeuvre," it has been translated into eight languages.[28] The critic Bernard Mouralis calls the novel "son meilleur livre" and notes that the novel recalls the first pages of André Malraux's L'Espoir.[29] A.C. Brench believes that Les Bouts de bois de dieu resembles Malraux's La Condition humaine although the passive resistance of the people in Ousmane's novel contrasts with the violence found in Malraux's story.[30] On the other hand, G.E. Von Grunebaum relates the form of Ousmane's book to the African narrative tradition of folklore,[31] and Brench believes that the author attempts to:

> . . . synthesize a traditional African narrative form with an alien medium of expression and to use this synthesis to portray the evolution of Modern Africa with its mixture of indigenous and Western technological elements.[32]

Both critics appear to derive this interpretation of Ousmane's novelistic style and form from the preface to his fifth work L'Harmattan (1964):

> Je ne fais pas la théorie du roman africain. Je me souviens pourtant que jadis dans cette Afrique qui passe pour classique, le griot était, non seulement l'élément dynamique de sa tribu, clan, village, mais aussi le témoin patent de chaque événement. C'est lui qui enregistrait, déposait devant tous sous l'arbre du palabre les faits et gestes de chacun. La conception de mon travail découle de cet enseignement: rester au plus près du réel et du peuple.[33]

Neither Brench nor Von Grunebaum, however, analyze Ousmane's Les Bouts de bois de dieu to discover whether or not his self-imposed role as griot is actually carried out in the form of his writing. Brench notes the "cinematographic abruptness" of the form which breaks off the action at a crucial moment. The movement from one setting to another gives the impression of a long lapse of time which suggests the long months of anxious waiting endured by the workers and their families.[34] Ousmane's style provokes the feeling of "direct involvement in events" and the simple vocabulary and sentence structure are suitable to the people he describes.[35] Bernard Mouralis believes that Ousmane ". . . évite ainsi l'anecdote en rattachant chaque fois à un ensemble plus vaste et qui les dépasse les événements particuliers. . . ."[36] In the critical discussion, however, there is no analysis of Les Bouts de bois de dieu in relation to the stylistic and formal elements of African folklore, from which the critics think Ousmane derives his inspiration. Apart from the simplicity in narrative technique and the use of folk songs in the novel, it is difficult to discover any immediate resemblances to folk literature. On the other hand, it is possible to find many similarities between Ousmane's Les Bouts de bois de dieu and the literature of Soviet Socialist Realism.

Socialist Realism in Soviet literature is exemplified in the novel form by an emphasis on social groups and social forces, which take precedence over individual characterization. The transparent political importance of character behaviour and dialogue, as well as a depiction of the development of the "New Man," through the presentation of ideological tendencies which are future-oriented, are literary techniques of Soviet Socialist Realism. The importance of the social group in a novel is indicated by the method of characterization. Instead of being defined according to their unique, psychological identity, the characters represent typical groups of people. Aleksandr Fedayev, a major writer of Soviet Socialist Realism, quotes Gorki on the depiction of characters in literature:

> The art of literary creation, the art of shaping characters and types requires ideas, speculations, inventions. When a writer describes an individual shopkeeper, official or worker whom he knows, he provides a more or less successful photograph of a particular person, but it is a

> photograph deprived of socioeducational significance. . . . But if the writer knows how to abstract the specially characteristic class features, habits, tendencies, gestures, views, speech mannerisms, etc. and condenses them in the form of a shopkeeper, official, worker, then with this technique the writer creates a type that is art.[37]

In Socialist Realism the depiction of the individual character is subordinate to the representation of class character. Development of the individual character on a level typical of a social group focuses attention on the role played by each person in the class struggle. The method of characterization as well as the introduction of a future oriented ideology into the story, suggests that Ousmane's writing in Les Bouts de bois de dieu is close to the style of Soviet Socialist Realism.

Ad'jibid'ji, Bakayoko's adopted daughter, exemplifies the future-oriented stance in the novel. Ad'jibid'ji is extremely precocious, the "Soungoutou" or the little daughter of the union and at eight years of age she has many of the traits characteristic of the socialist heroine. She is intelligent, aware of the necessity of a socialist education, and extremely independent for her age. Her ability to act on her own initiative, in a socialist manner is apparent when she attacks the policemen who break into her home. Ad'jibid'ji is the prototype of the socialist child who, because of her father, has the opportunity to learn the philosophy and the ideology of socialism from an early age. Unlike Penda and Ramatoulaye she does not have to overcome the defects of her past way of life in order to become a socialist. She has the benefit of a fresh start and the opportunity to equip herself for a better, socialist future.

The influence of Socialist Realism is particularly evident in Ousmane's handling of the role of the organizational cadres. Bakayoko is the man whom both the cadres and the rank and file look to for leadership. If he cannot be present in body in all the strike headquarters at the same time, he is present in spirit in the minds of the leaders and in the actions of the workers. After a conversation with N'Deye Daouda thinks:

> Quel était donc ce Bakayoko, on aurait dit que son ombre était sur chaque chose dans chaque maison; dans les phrases des autres, on retrouvait ses phrases, dans leurs idées ses idées à lui, et son nom même se répétait partout comme un écho?[38]

But the burden of leadership which Bakayoko shoulders must allow him to delegate authority in order for his position to be functional. Men such as Doudou the secretary-general of the union and Hahbib his assistant are given this power but their ability to lead is clearly inferior to Bakayoko's authority. Doudou's inferior powers are apparent in his fear that the union will not be able to properly perform its function of unifying the workers during the strike. However, Bakayoko has no such fears. When the worst crisis of the strike almost causes Doudou to collapse under the weight of his responsibility Ousmane notes that Bakayoko's patient and thorough preparation for just such a moment is lacking in Doudou. The amount of responsibility which the union leaders must shoulder is particularly apparent when it becomes evident that Bakayoko's speech is the key action in uniting the unions in a general strike. The success or failure of this action determines the success or failure of the railway workers.

Ousmane's handling of the characters in Les Bouts de bois de dieu does not resemble the psychological treatment of characters in Ngugi's novels. Instead of delving into the personal motivations for an action Ousmane minimizes individuality by depicting persons only as character types. Bakayoko, the hero of the novel, is the most powerfully drawn individual of a particular group--the ideological elite who lead the railway workers' strike with disinterestedness in personal considerations, unfailing strength, and correct political vision. At the beginning of the novel Bakayoko does not appear in person but he is mentioned by the workers and by his family as a man whose opinion is worthy of great respect. Because Bakayoko's name has become a legend among the people he attains the status of a figure who stands out from the masses. Bakayoko endures without complaint the day to day tribulations of the strike and he does not lose his patience in spite of the many difficulties he encounters. His full dedication to the political cause is emphasized when he refuses to return to his home after his mother is murdered. He believes his political duties are more pressing. Bakayoko's attitude causes Bakary to remark, "je me demande parfois si tu as un coeur. . . ."[39] The man may not appear to have a heart but his political understanding is advanced enough for him to make the correct personal choice from the point of view of socialist ideology.

Bakayoko's emotional relationships also reflect a high degree of political dedication. His lover, Penda, may be condemned as a prostitute by other men and women, but Bakayoko believes that N'Deye Touti's western standards of behaviour make her the true prostitute. When N'Deye asks him to marry her he replies:

> Tu n'arrives peut-être pas à la cheville de Penda. . . . Je sais ce qu'elle valait. C'était une vraie amie et elle a donné sa vie. Il y a plusieurs façons de se prostituer, tu sais. Il y a ceux qui le font sous la contrainte: Alioune, Deune, Idrissa, moi-même, nous prostituons notre travail à des gens que nous ne respectons pas. Il y a aussi ceux qui se prostituent moralement, les Mabigué, les N'Gaye, les Daouda. Et toi-même?[40]

Bakayoko implies that N'Deye has sold herself and the traditional values of her people in exchange for the illusory ideals of the capitalistic, western mode of life. Her actions are in contrast to those of Penda (whom Bakayoko would have accepted as a wife had she lived) who dedicates herself to the cause of the strikers. In spite of N'Deye's love for him, Bakayoko cannot spare her feelings. He is a true hero of the people who knows that love and friendship can be allowed to develop only within the context of the correct political cause. A man who has deepened his understanding of proletarian ideology to the point where he represents all that is best in the socialist tendencies of the people, Bakayoko's actions as a family man and a lover testify to his right to lead the striking workers.

Bakayoko, the union leader, is an example of characterization intensified to the level of the "type." Some of the children--the apprentices of Thiès--represent a particular social group engaged in the political struggle. The high level of discipline of the apprentices is analogous to the discipline the union leaders demand from the striking workers. As in the depiction of the strikers, none of the members of the apprentices' little army are developed as individual characters. The boys represent the "leaders" and the "led" in the railway strike. When their leader, Magatte, tells them that they must learn to shoot their slingshots properly they respond with a spirit of solidarity. "'Oui, mon général,' répondirent comme un seul homme les onze soldats dont le moins gradé était lieutenant."[41] Not only is the group well disciplined but they are, like the best of the workers, strong, self-reliant, and capable of acting on their own initiative. At a hint from one of the mothers they organize themselves to rob systematically the "toubabs" of their chickens in order to feed the starving natives, and with Penda they scheme to deprive the storekeeper of his rice. Their willingness to commit these offences derives from the ideology that appears in the literature of Soviet Socialist Realism. The law is a means for the oppressors to preserve the "status quo" at the expense of the oppressed masses. Revolutionary ideology, which demands that the oppressed struggle against the existing conditions, provides the apprentices with a justification for their disobedience of the law.

The bold deeds of the children reduce the white people to a state of armed terror, when the apprentices use the cover of darkness to break all the electric lights in the white district. But the full extent of their daring is only realized when Isnard, a white man, murders two of the children while they are innocently shooting rocks at a lizard. These children are so dedicated to the worker's cause that two of them sacrifice their lives. This sacrifice resembles the brave death of Penda and Samba N'Doulougou who are shot as the women marchers enter Dakar. The news of the murder of the two children is greeted by such shock and horror that the directors of the railway are forced to consent to their first meeting of negotiation with the union leaders.

In order to emphasize the revolutionary beliefs and the strong purpose of the working class, Ousmane contrasts their actions with the actions of some negative characters who are unwilling to co-operate during the strike. After the decision to call the strike has been taken Bachirou "the bureaucrat" who works on the staff of the railway office says:

> Peut-être que la nuit nous a porté conseil. Il faut voir les choses en face: notre syndicat n'est pas encore très solide pour se lancer dans une grève dont nous n'avons peut-être pas mesuré toutes les conséquences.[42]

It is appropriate according to the standards of Socialist Realism that Ousmane depicts Bachirou behaving in this manner because he is not truly a worker and cannot, therefore, be trusted to have the correct class sympathies. One of the workers accuses him of treachery:

> Ecoute, Bachirou, au fond, tu n'es pas content de toi, tu te demandes où est ta place: avec les ouvriers? Alors la direction te déclasse. Avec la direction? Alors tu te sens étranger chez nous. Etranger, tu es plus étranger à cette grève que M. le Directeur lui-même![43]

As true members of the proletariat the men are aware of the danger Bachirou represents.

Diara is an example of a man who completely betrays the proletariat. Diara is among the group of men who break the strike by returning to work. At first these men are punished by physical beatings. However, Tiemko's decision to put Diara on trial is a move which instills a greater sense of unity among the workers. Diara's humiliation at the public trial is far worse punishment than a beating. The trial also enables Ousmane to depict on a superficial level the psychological problems of a class solidarity which forces relatives to turn against each other. The author attempts to show that human affections are taken into account, even though they must not stop the functioning of socialist justice. The description of the scene between Diara and his son Sadio after the trial is held is very moving:

> Enfin, Sadio se leva et s'avança vers son père comme s'il glissait sur les planches de l'estrade. Un tremblement fiévreux agitait sa haute et mince silhouette qui dominait la forme paternelle toujours tassée sur sa chaise. Sadio écarta les lèvres pour prendre une inspiration comme s'il eût voulu parler, puis il se laissa tomber aux pieds de son père. Alors Diara se pencha sur son fils accroupi et soudain éclata en sanglots comme un enfant que l'on vient de corriger.[44]

The unhappiness of his son may stir some sympathies for Diara's plight but nonetheless socialist justice must be perpetuated.

The female characters in Les Bouts de bois de dieu are analyzed as various character types according to their part in the clearly defined social group formed by the women. The character types range from the older, traditional women of the house, such as Ramatoulaye, to the young, independent girls such as Penda. In keeping with the novel's ideological orientation towards a society of the future, the major character types among the group of women become more actively involved in promoting the socialist goals of the strike as the story progresses. The difficult situation brings out the strength and resourcefulness inherent in each woman. When Ramatoulaye kills the ram in order to provide meat for her family she does so as her first aggressive act against an oppressor whom she had previously faced in the traditional, passive manner. Her strength and determination are communicated to the other women who take up arms to fight the police. Ramatoulaye's example teaches the older women to accept a new and positive role within their own limited sphere. Penda's actions are also an inspiring example for the women. Up to the time of the strike, Penda's interest is centred on her affairs with men and her study of western fashion magazines. Asked to supervise the distribution of food to the worker's wives, she quickly assumes a role of responsibility in the community and becomes involved in the strike alongside the union leaders. Although Penda originally believes that "tous les hommes sont des chiens"[45] she quickly learns that the true enemy is the ruling class, not the members of the opposite sex. Penda's strong political spirit unites the women in their decision to march to Dakar and she keeps the group under control when the hardships of the long walk threaten them with defeat.

Although Penda and Ramatoulaye are the type of women capable of developing into militant supporters of the strike, Ousmane's novel includes examples of other typical female figures who gain a new understanding of themselves and their importance in the community as a result of the propagation of socialist ideology. Maīmouna, the blind woman, achieves dignity in her role as a mother. Before the strike Maīmouna had felt inferior because of her handicap. "Son infirmité la privait de sa condition de femme. Quel homme aurait voulu dormir avec un aveugle?"[46] But during the strike she learns to take great pride in her motherhood. While nursing her infant she murmurs, "J'arrose un arbre pour demain."[47] She is the mother of a child who can help the people build a new and magnificent future. Ousmane does not forget to include a representative of another group of women--one who remains quietly but loyally at home. Bakayoko's wife Assitan is such a woman. Married to Bakayoko by a traditional custom which did not allow her the free choice of a spouse, Assitan is respected but not loved by her husband. However, she accepts her position and makes the best of it as befits the wife of a man on whose existence the lives of thousands of other persons depend. She is the epitomy of the Senegalese woman reared according to ancient traditions. But she is also willing to learn and change according to the newer and greater understanding of her husband. At the beginning of the novel, Bakayoko forbids his family to speak French, and Assitan submits to his will so completely that she is willing to whip her daugher for speaking one word of the language. By the end of the strike Bakayoko is advanced enough in ideological understanding to realize that a knowledge of the French language is a helpful tool in the progress towards socialism. It is a key to education and learning which will further the revolutionary cause. Bakayoko also realizes that women have a role to play in the workers' struggle. When he offers to teach his wife French she agrees eagerly, but more out of her usual unquestioning obedience to her husband's wishes than out of an independent understanding of the relevance of the white man's language to the growth of the revolutionary cause.

Ousmane does not forget to depict a negative female character to stress the positive aspects of the other women. Awa, the wife of Sene Masene the foreman carpenter is a negative example because of her class as well as her behaviour during the march to Dakar. When Awa insists on resting even though it is necessary that the women keep walking, she is described in the following manner:

> Commodément installée le dos au ballast, la tête sous un petit arbuste, elle semblait la reine des abeilles entourée de ses ouvrières.[48]

She refuses to listen to Penda's orders by calling on her position as the wife of a foreman. Awa convinces some of the marchers that evil spirits are among the group of women causing great confusion among their ranks. Awa does not keep silent until Penda subdues her by physical force. She eventually apologizes but not before she seriously threatens the success of the march.

Despite his belief in a proletarian based revolution, which is apparent in Les Bouts de bois de dieu, Ousmane restricts the political activity of his female characters to a supportive role dependent on the leadership of the male revolutionaries. Assitan, Ramatoulaye, and Maïmouma--mothers and housewives--contribute to the revolution by caring for men and children. In Ousmane's novel, socialism offers the women no vision of freedom or of practical relief from the role in which they have been imprisoned for centuries. Though the men improve by the end of the novel to the point where they treat their wives with some small amount of courtesy, the female characters are still not equal to the men. Penda engages in militant political activity but she remains the leader of the women, not of the men, because Ousmane does not expand the sphere of the women characters to include activity in the labour force. Neither does he give them full credit for their work in the home. This problem may be outlined in the following manner:

> . . . if the revolutionary movement is to involve women, not as supporters or attendants, but as equals, then the scope of production must be seen in a wider sense and cover also the production undertaken by the women in the family and the production of self through sexuality.[49]

Although novels of Soviet Socialist Realism sometimes depict women in an active economic capacity, their work is likely to be restricted to jobs where they remain in a subordinate position to men.[50] In his illustration of character types, Ousmane's limited understanding of revolutionary freedom for the female sex is apparently patterned on the Soviet literary model.

The double oppression of women in Les Bouts de bois de dieu is explicitly related to their sexuality. Maïmouna's feeling that she has lost her individual dignity is not a result of her blindness, but derives from her belief that no man will sleep with a blind woman. The jokes made about physical relationships in the novel suggest that women engage in sexual activity with the same submissive posture they assume in Ngugi's novels:

> Les hommes ont été gentils. Tu as vu comme le forgeron
> suait en portant Awa?
> Bah! pour une fois qu'il en avait une sur le dos. Nous
> les avons bien sur le ventre toutes les nuits, eux![51]

N'Deye Touti criticizes Penda's numerous physical relationships with men in an attempt to destroy Bakayoko's positive image of the woman. "Toutes les femmes . . . disent qu'il n'y avait que le chemin de fer qui ne lui était pas passé dessus."[52] N'Deye assumes that Penda's active sexuality is degrading and submissive. Under the watchful eyes of her husband Doudou, Oulaye is forced to subdue the sexual desire aroused in her by the memory of a film she had seen. In the film a woman kissed a man on the lips, but Oulaye has experienced no such caresses from her husband:

> Tu veux quelque chose? demanda Doudou. . . . Oulaye fit semblant de dormir. Elle avait honte d'elle-même, honte de ce désir anormal, pervers, incompréhensible. Jamais Doudou ne l'avait embrassée. Pourtant jusqu'à le sommeil vînt la prendre, elle pensa à ce baiser.[53]

Oulaye's compliant role prevents her from achieving the fulfilment of her sexual needs because she is afraid to communicate them to Doudou. Both Ousmane and Ngugi severely limit the individual and social rights of the female characters in their books. Whether influenced by the Soviet socialist attitude that reduces women to a helpful but limited revolutionary role, in Ousmane's case, or whether motivated by the unconscious assimilation of the western bourgeois perception of the female as a commodity which is apparent in Ngugi's novels, neither author acknowledges woman's equality with man.

After he published Les Bouts de bois de dieu, Ousmane's period of study at the Gorki Film Studio in Moscow, as well as his travels in Africa in 1961 and 1962, considerably altered his perspective on the function of aesthetic form and content:

> En somme, il vient au cinéma par nécessité. En se rendans compte qu'avec ses romans et ses nouvelles, il n'atteint qu'un petit nombre de gens, précisément ceux-là qui ont déjà à leur disposition quantité de possibilités de se cultiver parce qu'ils savent lire et écrire le français.[54]

As he learned that film was the best means of reaching the majority of the Senegalese people, Ousmane also realized that the native language of Oulof offered a vehicle for communicating with a larger proportion of the population than the French language which was understood only by the privileged few. However, before beginning work on film he published the French edition of L'Harmattan in 1964, the first of a projected trilogy of novels in the tradition of Balzac. This book goes beyond anecdotal, historical facts about Senegal in an attempt to arrive ". . . par un effort de synthèse, à des schèmes généraux ou à des personnages à la fois complexes et fortement typés, à la manière des grands romanciers."[55]

Since his film study in Moscow, Ousmane's main interest has been the production of films in both French and Oulof. He writes short stories from which he creates the film or he bases a short story on one of his films. Sembene's second film Niaye (1964), which was published as the story Vehi-Ciosane ou Blanche-Genèse in 1966, illustrates the change in style and content typical of Ousmane's work after the publication of Les Bouts de bois de dieu. The novel does not analyze overtly political subject matter but instead tells the story of incest, patricide, and murder in a small African village. The crumbling of ancient feudal tradition is symbolized by the dishonour which the chief of the village brings on his family by his incestuous act. The details of the plot direct the style of the story. An investigation of the motive and effects of the act of incest, which drives a mother to suicide and intensifies a son's madness to the point where he murders his father, presupposes a psychological study of the characters. The novelist's interest in personal psychology as it occurs amidst the breakdown of social order is confirmed by Ousmane's introduction to the story:

> Les symptômes du présent--notre vie sociale--ne m'autorisent pas à te prédire une vie meilleure. Alors, comme des milliers, anonymes, arrivés à l'âge de conscience, tu te révolteras d'une mauvaise révolte--individuelle ou collective--mal dirigée. . . . Pour toi, VEHI CIOSANE,

> NGONE WAR THIANDUM . . . puisses-tu préparer la genèse de notre monde nouveau. Car c'est des tares d'un vieux monde, condamné, que naîtra ce monde nouveau tant attendu, tant rêvé.[56]

Ousmane no longer sees social revolution as a real possibility in Senegal. Although he points out that the old order must die so that the new order can be born, the rebirth is only a dream for the future. Thus his story turns to a discussion of the immediate problem of individual trauma produced by social upheaval, an approach typical of his films and his later works which are close to critical realism.

Ousmane's films such as Le Mandat of 1968 and La Noire de . . . (also published as short stories) deal with problems relevant to society in contemporary Senegal but, unlike the novel Les Bouts de bois de dieu, they contain no vision of a brighter future for the people. The hero of Le Mandat is exploited both by government bureaucrats and by his fellow villagers because he is too incompetent to deal with the social structure in modern Senegal. La Noire de . . . is the story of a servant girl who is given the opportunity to travel to France with her employers. The realization of her dream becomes a nightmare when her employers refuse to allow her any free time while they visit France. In despair the girl commits suicide. These films are concerned with the tragedy of life in modern Senegal which is viewed from a perspective that shows the people as helpless and self-destructive. The optimism of Les Bouts de bois de dieu is not evident in any of Ousmane's film productions.

In his latest film productions Ousmane's pessimism is apparent in his satire. Emitai (1973) which takes place during World War Two is the story of the attempt of the French troops to seize twenty tons of rice from a Senegalese village. The villagers need the rice only for a ritual sacrifice and the French do not really need it for food. In this ironic situation which causes the struggle between the villagers and the troops Ousmane's interest is in:

> . . . the life of the village; in the difficult, slightly hostile relations between the men . . . and the women . . . and in the relations between the men and the gods.[57]

Ousmane satirizes the actions of both the French and the natives in Emitai. In the movie Xala (1975), also published as a novel, Ousmane's satire becomes stronger and more bitter. In this case he attacks the black bourgeois class which serves as an agent of the French neocolonialists. El Hadji, the story's protagonist, marries a third wife and discovers to his horror that he is impotent. Someone has laid the curse of "Xala" upon him. His physical impotence is symbolical of the political impotence of his class which has no real power. Caught between the neo-colonialists and his identification with his native heritage El Hadji finally redeems himself:

> In comes a procession of cripples and beggars. . . . El Hadji can become himself again--not himself as a profiteer but himself as a man and an African--if he will strip and let himself be spit upon.[58]

The unpleasant manner in which the symbolic regeneration of El Hadji is accomplished is indicative of the degree of Ousmane's bitterness against the structure of contemporary Senegalese society.

Although Ousmane's films may have a Marxist perspective he acknowledges that:

> Son rôle n'est pas de donner des solutions aux problèmes qu'il expose et qu'il dénonce. C'est l'affaire des responsables politiques et des gouvernements.[59]

Ousmane disclaims any overt political goal in his cultural work, an attitude which effectively removes him from a role as a "cog and wheel in the whole revolutionary machine."[60] He abandons the goals of Soviet Socialist Realism in his work of the 1960's and the 1970's. But even in Les Bouts de bois de dieu Ousmane employs literary techniques alien to the African culture. This alienation coupled with the fact that only twenty-seven percent of the Senegalese people are literate and only fifteen percent of the people are French speaking[61] suggests that Ousmane's novel could not possibly be used as a political tool to propagate revolutionary ideology. Ousmane fails to perform the major literary task of "popularization" which Mao sets for the writer in the Talks.

NOTES

CHAPTER III

[1] Biographical information is taken from three sources; Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing (Washington, D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1972), pp. 391-94; Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, Sembene Ousmane: Cinéaste, Collection Approches (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972), pp. 9-25; Hans M. Zell and Helene Silver, eds., A Reader's Guide to African Literature (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1971), pp. 171-72.

[2] Robert Cornevin, Littératures d'Afrique noire de langue française, Littératures Modernes, 10 (Vendôme: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), p. 180.

[3] Zell, p. 171.

[4] Herdeck, p. 391.

[5] Bernard Mouralis, Individu et collectivité dans le roman négro-africain d'expression française (Abidjan: Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan, 1969), p. 116.

[6] Lamine Diakhaté, "Revue de Le Docker noir," Présence Africaine, April-May 1957, pp. 153-54.

[7] Ibid., p. 154.

[8] Sembene Ousmane, Le Docker noir (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Debresse, 1956), p. 86.

[9] Ibid., p. 63.

[10] Ibid., p. 196.

[11] Ibid., pp. 195-96.

[12] Sunday O. Anozie, Sociologie du roman africain (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1970), p. 192.

[13] Mouralis, p. 116.

[14] See Herdeck, p. 139; the novel has been translated into Dutch, Albanian, Japanese, German, Hungarian, Slovak, Rumanian, and Bulgarian.

[15] See U. Beier, "Review of *O Pays, mon beau peuple!*," *Black Orpheus*, Nov. 1959, p. 56; Jingiri Achiriga, *La Révolte des romanciers noirs de langue française* (Ottawa: Editions Naaman, 1973), p. 143; J.I. Gleason, *This Africa: Novels by West Africans in English and French* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 79.

[16] Francis Fouet, "Le Thème de l'amour chez les romanciers négro-africains d'expression française," *Actes du Colloque sur la Littérature Africaine d'Expression Française, Dakar, mars 26-29 1963*, Langues et Littératures, 14 (Dakar: Université de Dakar, 1965), p. 145.

[17] Sembene Ousmane, *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (Paris: Livre Contemporain, 1957), p. 14.

[18] Ibid., p. 108.

[19] Ibid., p. 213.

[20] Achiriga, p. 146.

[21] *O Pays*, p. 15.

[22] Ibid., p. 15.

[23] Ibid., p. 201.

[24] Anozie, p. 194.

[25] *O Pays*, p. 69.

[26] Ibid., pp. 149-50.

[27] Ibid., pp. 233-34.

[28] See Herdeck, p. 392; it has been translated into English, Italian, Dutch, Japanese, Lithuanian, Uzbek, Ukrainian, and Hungarian.

[29] Mouralis, p. 116.

[30] A.C. Brench, The Novelist's Inheritance in French Africa: Writers from Senegal to Cameroon (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 112.

[31] G.E. Von Grunebaum, French African Literature: Some Cultural Implications (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), p. 34.

[32] A.C. Brench, Writing in French from Senegal to Cameroon (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 116.

[33] Sembene Ousmane, L'Harmattan (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1964), p. 10.

[34] Brench, The Novelist's, p. 115.

[35] Ibid., p. 117.

[36] Ibid., p. 116.

[37] Aleksandr Fadayev, "Socialist Realism," Encyclopaedia of World Literature in the Twentieth Century (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1971).

[38] Sembene Ousmane, Les Bouts de bois de Dieu (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1960), p. 110.

[39] Sembene Ousmane, Les Bouts de bois de Dieu, p. 293.

[40] Ibid., p. 342.

[41] Ibid., p. 245.

[42] Ibid., p. 38.

[43] Ibid., p. 38

[44] Ibid., pp. 156-57.

[45] Ibid., p. 222.

[46] Ibid., p. 221.

[47] Ibid., p. 339.

[48] Ibid., p. 300.

[49] Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 246.

[50] For a full discussion of the various treatments of women in Soviet Socialist Realism see Zenia Gasiorcuska, *Women in Soviet Fiction 1917-1964* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968).

[51] *Les Bouts*, p. 312.

[52] Ibid., p. 342.

[53] Ibid., pp. 227-28.

[54] Vieyra, p. 144.

[55] Mouralis, p. 117.

[56] Sembene Ousmane, *Vehi-Ciosane ou Blanche-Genèse suivi du Mandat* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1966), p. 17.

[57] Roger Greenspun, "Review of *Emitai*," *The New York Times*, 10 Feb. 1973, p. 22.

[58] Richard Eder, "Review of *Xala*," *The New York Times*, 1 Oct. 1975, p. 62.

[59] Vieyra, p. 145.

[60] Mao, *Talks*, p. 25.

[61] L. Savané, "Sénégal (République du)," *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (Paris: Encyclopaedia Universalis France, 1968).

CONCLUSION

The difficulty of using Mao's literary theory as a guide to the writing of socialist literature or as the basis of a critical methodology in a historical and national context different from that of the Chinese Revolution is apparent in the discussion of the works of James Ngugi and Sembene Ousmane. The ideas expressed in the Yenan Talks are based on the development of Marxist philosophy, the extension of the Marxist-Leninist theory of political practice, and the adaptation of Soviet literary doctrine to suit the needs of the Chinese Communist Party. Thus Mao's thoughts on literature are characterized by a practical relevance to the historical situation of China and, therefore, their application to African literature is extremely problematic. Mao stresses the actions of the peasantry as the motive force of the socialist revolution and the most important audience for socialist literature. But in the native countries of the two African authors the peasantry is disorganized and illiterate and thus lacks a socialist consciousness. Because socialist literary works cannot be properly distributed or completely understood, those created with the aim of developing the peasant's knowledge of socialist philosophy and practice have little effect on this group of people. However, the educational and practical experiences which are reflected in the books of Ngugi and Ousmane also alienate the authors and their novels from a large proportion of the African population, especially the peasants. Mao's literary criteria cannot be reconciled with the low level of political consciousness of the African peasants or with the objective political and personal situation of the writers whose works have been examined. The attempt to develop Mao's ideas on literature into a critical methodology which can be used to discuss the writings of Ngugi and Ousmane results in discrepancies between the historical, national characteristics of the Chinese literary theory, the African subject matter of the novels, the literary form which is influenced by the western aesthetic tradition, and the literary content which is influenced by a western philosophy--Marxism.

Mao's development of a socialist literary theory that is relevant to the Chinese heritage but which is also derived from Soviet sources is consistent with his expansion of the Marxist ideas of political theory to suit the unique situation of the Chinese people. Mao first discussed this problem in 1938 in the context of his conflict with the pro-Soviet group, the Shanghai based members of the Chinese Communist Party who favoured proletarian revolution rather than Mao's policy of agrarian revolution. He formulated the concept of the "Sinification of Marxism" which indicated the transformation of Marxism to fit Chinese peculiarities of style and manner as well as a more drastic change in the essence of Marxism to conform with the legacy of Chinese history.[1] In both his political practice and his literary theory Mao emphasized the need to adjust Marxism to suit the needs of the Chinese revolution. Mao's poetry is the strongest indication of his loyalty to Chinese tradition. Although he rejected the bourgeois and feudal cultures of China, he remained interested in shih and tz'u poetry and the traditional forms which help express the revolutionary sentiments of his poetry. However, he indicated his preference for the cultural values of the oppressed majority in China. In Mao's view socialist literature was also nationalist literature and could be integrated with the indigenous literary forms of China. His ideas on literature are part of his total Sinification of Marxist philosophy and political practice.

The Sinification of Marxism was necessary to the success of the Chinese Revolution. But Mao did not merely remould and assimilate foreign influences in the context of the Chinese past, he also re-evaluated Marxism within the framework of the objective, material conditions of the socialist revolution and China's part in the Second World War, an attitude which is reflected in his literary theory. Mao delivered the Talks at Yenan during the communist participation in the united front against the Japanese, when the revolution had been in progress in China for several years. Thus a strong revolutionary force and an organized party elite existed which could be depended upon to educate the masses in socialist ideology and practice. Although the Yenan Talks were aimed at the intellectuals gathered in Yenan, and clearly delineated their role in literary production, Mao believed that through this production the intellectuals served the cause of the revolution and the cause of the people. The dissemination of socialist literature to the peasants was possible in China in 1942 because a five year program of educational reform had been carried out by the communists that enabled one child in every six to attend school, a great advance on the previous educational situation.[2] In 1944 a more extensive education movement brought literacy to hundreds of isolated villages in the border regions for the first time. The local people ran their own educational institutions under the guidance of the party. The task of the Red Army was not only to fight the revolution on the military front, but also to educate the masses in socialist ideology, a duty which required them to teach the peasants how to read. The material conditions of Chinese history, including the systematic development of a literate peasantry through the efforts of the party cadres, made Mao's program for the distribution of a literature of socialist propaganda outlined in the Yenan Talks a feasible project in China during the 1940's.

The historical conditions in the countries of Kenya and Senegal which are reflected in the subject matter of the novels of Ngugi and Ousmane bear little resemblance to the circumstances in China during the 1940's. The literacy rate remains extremely low in the African countries because no extensive program for educational reform has been effected in spite of the supposedly liberating role of the nationalist struggles. But most importantly, neither Kenya nor Senegal have a large and powerful socialist party to carry out the educational tasks accomplished by the Chinese communists. In both African countries all opposition to the government is suppressed and apart from the governmental party all political parties are illegal. Not only does the lack of a communist party elite to educate the illiterate masses hinder the effective distribution of popular socialist literature in the manner in which it was accomplished during the Chinese revolution, it also leaves the intellectuals without the ideological guidance which was given to the Chinese writers.

The absence of a strong socialist party isolates the African writers from consistent political direction; this is apparent in Ngugi's slow and inconsistent growth towards a proletarian revolutionary consciousness and Ousmane's movement away from socialist literature after the publication of Les Bouts de bois de dieu. However, these authors also face the difficulty of the contradiction between their westernized, personal and educational experiences, and the social and cultural institutions of the African people. Although the intellectuals at Yenan were in a similar predicament--they represented the educational achievements of an extremely small segment of the Chinese population--the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao made every effort to help them integrate their literary work with the aspirations of the peasants and workers. The African writers, on the other hand, do not have the framework of the party structure within which to resolve the problem of their alienation from their own people and culture. Ngugi's education as well as his position as the head of the English department at the University of Nairobi, which he held up to the time of his arrest, separates him from the majority of the Kenyan people and is not conducive to the practical or theoretical development of a socialism relevant to the African situation. Ousmane's refusal to acknowledge that the uniqueness of African circumstances necessitates a corresponding adjustment in socialist practice is apparent in his belief expressed in Les Bouts de bois de dieu that the Soviet version of socialism is relevant to Senegalese society.

The distance between the authors and the peasants is intensified by Ngugi's and Ousmane's refusal to adapt socialist ideology to the African environment and by their acceptance of the basically western philosophy of Marxism. They do not realize that socialist political theory and practice must be adjusted to fit the concrete historical conditions, an understanding which is explicit in Mao's development of the concept of the Sinification of Marxism. Ngugi's and Ousmane's western, intellectual understanding of socialism, which is characteristic of an elite African group, creates an enormous distance between the world view of the writers and the world view of the African peasants.

The predicament of the two African writers caught between their western intellectual and political training and their sympathies with the African people is also apparent in the conflict between aesthetic quality and political ideology which characterizes their works. Ngugi's narrative techniques and the psychological development of the characters in A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood is considerably weaker in the portions of the novels which contain strong ideological statements. The experimentation with form, style, and symbolic content in Ousmane's stories causes them to fall short of the standards of ideological expression apparent in Les Bouts de bois de dieu. The difficulty of resolving the contradiction between aesthetics and ideology in a literary work is also a problem implicit in Mao's Talks. Mao attempts to maintain the double standard of aesthetics and ideology in his criteria for literature, but the emphasis is on the necessity of adhering to the correct political line and not on the aesthetic problems encountered by the Marxist writer. However, Mao chose to stress the ideological criteria due to the exigencies of the condition in which the Chinese revolutionaries found themselves at Yenan. Ngugi and Ousmane are also faced with a difficult situation in which they must attempt to find a link between their western aesthetic training and their ties with the African people. Unlike the China of the 1940's, in Africa there is no viable solution which can be followed through with consistency and success. The conflict between the aesthetic form and the political content in the writings of Ngugi and Ousmane is a sign of the ambiguity inherent in the objective situation the authors face rather than in their personal weaknesses as socialist writers.

It is possible that Mao's literary theory could be relevant to the literature of the African continent if it were to be considered in relation to African folklore and folk poetry. Traditional literature imbued with socialist ideology would be more accessible to the African peasantry than the socialist novels of Ngugi and Ousmane both in terms of the language employed and the literary content. This would be consistent with Mao's promotion of indigenous literary forms, a political tactic deployed during the Hundred Flowers Movement when amateur poetry clubs were founded to encourage the writing of socialist poetry by the masses. Mao suggests that socialist literature must be in a language the people can read and it must be written in a style which is relevant to their everyday lives. He overcame the difficulty of achieving this goal in China by encouraging the writers to utilize the literary forms of the peasants. Although the African writers could follow a similar direction in literary language and form, they would be without the guidance of a strong socialist party which made possible the application of Mao's literary criteria to the creation of a Chinese socialist literature. Under the present conditions it is difficult to perceive that either the African intellectuals or the African peasants are prepared to carry out the task of creating a literature of socialist propaganda without the intervention of a communist party.

NOTES

CONCLUSION

[1] Stuart R. Schram, "The Marxist," Mao Tse-Tung in the Scales of History, ed. Dick Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 42.

[2] Mark Selden, The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 269.

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